

# An Oceanic Nation of Pirates in *Emmanuel Appadocca or Blighted Life: A Tale of the Boucaniers*

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ABSTRACT: In *Emmanuel Appadocca or Blighted Life: A Tale of the Boucaniers* (1854), sometimes called the first novel of the Anglophone Caribbean, Maxwell Philip has his eponymous protagonist revenge himself on the world as a pirate in the transnational space of the Caribbean. The pirate forms not only a crew but a nation that functions as a challenge to the British Empire. The novel thus subverts the traditional accusation of pirates as men without a nation. As captain of this ship-nation, Appadocca is no longer excluded because of his race. In analysing this relatively little-known novel, I investigate how his nation can exist because it is limited to a ship, a heterotopic space. It moves within the atopia of the ocean, an untameable space that takes up a central role in the British imaginary precisely because it is outside the power of the Empire. The question remains whether such an oceanic nation can ever be stable.

KEYWORDS: Caribbean; Piracy; Nation; Empire; Heterotopia; Atopia; Emmanuel Appadocca; Maxwell Philip



IN THE PREFACE to his novel *Emmanuel Appadocca or Blighted Life: A Tale of the Boucaniers* (1854), Maxwell Philip rhapsodizes about his native island of Trinidad. He describes its 'green woods, smiling sky, beautiful flowers and romantic gulf' and expresses his wish that one day he might be buried there with a view of the ocean.<sup>1</sup> Why the location of his burial place cannot be taken for granted becomes clear when looking at the place in which Philip is writing this preface: Elm Court, Temple, in London. This is where he, the son of a renowned Creole family, was taking the bar, an

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<sup>1</sup> Maxwell Philip, 'Preface', in *Emmanuel Appadocca or Blighted Life: A Tale of the Boucaniers*, ed. by Selwyn R. Cudjoe (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), p. 6 (p. 6).

undertaking for which he had to cross the Atlantic. In addition to England and Trinidad, the author also invokes the United States when explaining what prompted him to write his only novel, namely 'the cruel manner in which the slave holders of America deal with their slave-children'.<sup>2</sup> He goes on to lament the fact that any parent would enslave his own child and put them to work in the fields. His novel, he explains, tries to imagine how a child might respond to such a treatment. While slavery had been abolished in the British West Indies for good in 1838 with the end of the apprenticeship system, the United States still allowed the practice as of 1854. By specifically invoking slavery, the text gains a particular inflection that allows us to read it as a work of what Paul Gilroy calls the black Atlantic. This concept highlights that the formation of modernity was not only a European project but very much involved Africa as part of the Atlantic world, connected through slavery and other economic ties. Gilroy adds that 'the black Atlantic can be defined, on one level, through this desire to transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity'.<sup>3</sup> Hence, the Atlantic world is understood as a transnational space. In the preface, the novel is explicitly situated in that transnational space. Authors like Gesa Mackenthun discuss the novel within a more broadly speaking American context; her aim is to break with the continental and nationalist focus of American literary studies by also reading texts from the wider Americas. Mackenthun's reading of *Emmanuel Appadocca* is intended to 'situate the United States within the larger context of the slave-based Atlantic economy' and to understand the novel as a text that '[looks] back to the unfulfilled promise of the *Declaration of Independence* just as [it looks] forward to the building race tensions of the antebellum period'.<sup>4</sup> In essence, she makes connections similar to those made by Philip in his preface. By contrast, I will focus instead on the relation between the Caribbean and Britain, which, while it was slowly turning its imperial eye elsewhere, still had considerable interests in the West Indies in the 1850s.

Before giving a clearer outline of my argument, it is necessary to give a short summary of this relatively little-known text. The novel tells the story of the eponymous Emmanuel Appadocca, who attempts to overcome the limits set to him as a result of

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Gesa Mackenthun, *Fictions of the Black Atlantic in American Foundational Literature* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 85.

his race and the colonial order. Described as a '[q]uadroon', that is to say of one quarter African descent, the young Trinidadian goes to Europe to study philosophy, hoping to become a professor and enrich humankind's understanding of the world.<sup>5</sup> When his mother dies, he not only loses his financial support but also learns that his father James Willmington is not dead as he had previously assumed. Instead, the wealthy planter had deserted his mother after their affair. Enraged, Appadocca nonetheless decides to apply to his father for help but he never receives an answer. On the point of starvation, he returns to the Caribbean, turning his back on society and vowing revenge on his father. He gathers a pirate crew around himself, hunting for his father on his Black Schooner. In the process, he becomes a feared captain in the Caribbean. He ultimately catches his father and prosecutes him for neglect under the laws of his ship-nation, sentencing him to death. In the pursuit of his revenge, he has cause to battle with representatives of the British Empire. It is my claim that in the process of this resistance to imperial power, he and his crew are more than a momentary coalition of disgruntled sailors: in the transnational space of the Caribbean, Appadocca creates his own proto-nation on his ship. Following Benedict Anderson, the nation is understood as 'an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign'.<sup>6</sup> Anthony D. Smith argues that

[A] political community [...] implies at least some common institutions and a single code of rights and duties for all the members of the community. It also suggests a definite social space, a fairly well demarcated and bounded territory, with which the members identify and to which they feel they belong.<sup>7</sup>

A ship is just such a bounded territory and – ideally – the mariners identify with their crew. To what extent this holds true for Appadocca's nation will be explored shortly. As for the purpose of this nation, it functions as an alternative space to the British Empire, as it not only has a place for the mixed-race Appadocca, but actually allows him to

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<sup>5</sup> Philip, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn (London: Verso, 2006), p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 9.

become the leader of this nation. This subversion is possible because of the space in which he moves: the ocean.

By positing a counter-imaginary to that of the British Empire, Philip follows a path similar to that taken by white Creoles earlier in the century. They were trying to defend themselves against the negative stereotypes about not quite white Creoles circulating in the metropolitan centre. This group, Candace Ward writes, had chosen the novel to make their pro-slavery arguments, as they felt they could not achieve their aims by adding to the already prolific non-fiction discussion on slavery.<sup>8</sup> By turning to the novel they hoped to counter what they deemed the political fictions of their opponents; they claimed a superior authority due to their residence in the Caribbean, Ward explains:

These attempts, of course, were not simply exercises in literary form, but represented creole novelists' contributions to a wider epistemological project to overturn 'old', that is, metropolitan or European, presuppositions about white creole degeneracy and art to validate, in their place, white creole ways of knowing predicated on experience of life in the Caribbean colonies.<sup>9</sup>

By writing the preface, Philip makes clear that he has similar intentions, but this time on behalf of the mixed-race Creoles, again based on the claim of authenticity invoked through his Trinidadian heritage. Instead of defending slavery, he imagines an alternative Caribbean society which has proto-national shape. It makes sense that he would turn to a nautical adventure story to do so, as 'the maritime adventure [was becoming] an expression of the national character'.<sup>10</sup> This is not unexpected, considering that much of Britain's imperial power was built on naval power, especially in the Caribbean.<sup>11</sup> The authors of nautical adventure stories, Sara H. Ficke argues, not

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<sup>8</sup> Candace Ward, *Crossing the Line: Early Creole Novels and Anglophone Caribbean Culture in the Age of Emancipation* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017), pp. 14-15.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> John Peck, *Maritime Fiction: Sailors and the Sea in British and American Novels, 1719-1917* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> It was only in 1797 that Britain sent a fleet to capture Trinidad, at that time controlled by Spain, with whom Britain was at war. The defender of the island was the Spanish Vice Admiral Don Sebastian Ruiz de Apadoca, who sank his ships rather than have them fall into the hands of the enemy. The name of

only mirrored back what already existed but in fact created new ideas of nationality.<sup>12</sup> She goes on to explain that after the abolition of slavery, Britain had to contend with a newly mobile black population. Both black and white authors worked through this expansion of freedom by featuring transatlantic black sailors and black pirates in their stories, using the contrast to the white sailors to construct a white masculine national identity.<sup>13</sup> This was possible because by the 1830s, the sailor had transformed from a rogue into a solid citizen.<sup>14</sup> Britain now conceived the hierarchy on the ship as well as the strategic and commercial function of maritime activity as an extension as well as a defence of social and political order. Consequently, it also had to reckon with the presence of those of African descent in that order.

However, it is important to stress that racial anxiety was built into the Anglophone Atlantic novel from the very start. As Laura Doyle writes, this is the inheritance of the

Whig narrative of English history [in which] the nation's ruptures and revolutions were explained as the effects of a uniquely Saxonist legacy of freedom; and in complex, implicit ways, the English-language novel from *Oroonoko* to *Quicksand* has taken up this racial legacy.<sup>15</sup>

Doyle calls such texts liberty narratives. As indicated in the quote above, this liberty narrative is one that is originally Anglo-Saxon, and as such, freedom is seen as the purview of whiteness.<sup>16</sup> The Atlantic crossing which plays a central part in these liberty narratives is ultimately a racialized movement of liberty. For writers of African descent, the crossing of the Atlantic is more complicated than that, as it is initially not one of

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the protagonist of the novel seems to be taken from that figure, strengthening his transnational and nautical stature. William Cain, in Maxwell Philip, *Emmanuel Appadocca or Blighted Life: A Tale of the Boucaniers*, ed. by Selwyn R. Cudjoe (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), p. 3 (footnote).

<sup>12</sup> Sara H. Ficke, 'Pirates and Patriots: Citizenship, Race, and the Transatlantic Adventure Novel', in *Transatlantic Literary Exchanges 1790-1870: Gender, Race, and Nation*, ed. by Kevin Hutchings and Julia M. Wright (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 115–29 (p. 117).

<sup>13</sup> Ficke, p. 115.

<sup>14</sup> Peck, p. 51.

<sup>15</sup> Laura Anne Doyle, *Freedom's Empire: Race and the Rise of the Novel in Atlantic Modernity, 1640-1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

freedom but one of enslavement through the Middle Passage. Yet, after attaining liberty, this could change, as people like Olaudah Equiano found freedom in their travels and wrote about their experiences.<sup>17</sup> For Doyle, 'most structurally, we can see how a racialized pattern of narrative [...] inflect[s] language, sort[s] persons, and creat[es] divergent bodily and social experiences through a racialized liberty discourse'.<sup>18</sup> In order to be able to claim freedom for themselves, the African-Atlantic writers need to do so under the sign of race; they contribute to the racial order of the Atlantic in order to position themselves on the side of modernity.<sup>19</sup> *Emmanuel Appadocca* is such a liberty narrative from a writer of African descent, but the liberty espoused is not all encompassing.

Philip, whose novel is a claim for equality, clearly writes within this racialised Atlantic system. Yet, in spite of this claim for equality, there are not only racist but outright racist tendencies in the novel. They are most notable in Jack Jimmy, a black servant, who is frequently made the object of ridicule by the pirates as well as the narrator: 'If the appearance of the little man was calculated to raise laughter when he was crouching, it was much more so when he was standing up; and really there was something in him peculiarly comical'.<sup>20</sup> His supposed comical nature is explicitly connected to his supposed racial nature, as the comments on his ridiculousness are followed by a lengthy description of the man, which includes the following: 'his long bony jaws projected to an extraordinary length in front'.<sup>21</sup> Phrenologists considered a protruding jaw as one of the signs of inhibited racial development.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, Jack Jimmy is compared to an ape 'in his crouching position, where it was difficult to distinguish him from the ideal of a rolled up ouranoutan [*sic*]', an image which is typically used to indicate that those of African descent are supposedly closer to animals than to humans.<sup>23</sup> Other black characters are described in similarly racialised terms, as

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<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth A. Bohls, *Slavery and the Politics of Place: Representing the Colonial Caribbean, 1770-1833* (Cambridge: University Press, 2014), p. 13

<sup>18</sup> Doyle, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6

<sup>20</sup> Philip, p. 30.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Cornel West, 'A Genealogy of Modern Racism', in *Race Critical Theories*, ed. by David Theo Goldberg and Philomena Essed (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), pp. 90-112 (p. 101).

<sup>23</sup> Philip, p. 29.

per the logic of the Anglophone Atlantic novel described by Doyle. It becomes evident that even within a text that is making a claim for equality, this equality is dependent on being as close as possible to the white ideal. This also holds true for the protagonist. Appadocca is described as a quadroon, yet his pale skin is emphasised several times.<sup>24</sup> When talking about his family, or more precisely his mother, he indicates that his mother's ancestors had enjoyed a high station, presumably talking about the white part of his ancestry.<sup>25</sup> Appadocca frequently emphasises the white half of his family rather than the black half. The text goes beyond racialising its characters, to set up a racist hierarchy.

Yet, Appadocca does not simply disregard the African part of his heritage. For instance, he quite literally speaks with the voice of his mixed-race mother; his father who has never met him, recognises him because he sounds like her.<sup>26</sup> Appadocca also makes clear that he does not consider Europe to be the only or even the greatest source of knowledge: 'It was [...] among a race, which is now despised and oppressed, [that] speculation took wing, and the mind burst forth, and, scorning things of earth, scaled the heavens, read the stars, and elaborated systems of philosophy, religion and government'.<sup>27</sup> He posits Africa as a forerunner in terms of knowledge production, while other regions lay in darkness. His attitude towards his black and white heritage is ambiguous, as he feels attraction and rejection towards both. Nonetheless, there are hints that he is not simply trapped in between, but rather manages to forge his own identity by seeing the black Atlantic *avant la lettre*. His transnational embrace of both African and European values in order to forge a new identity makes him Caribbean, or as he puts it: 'I am an animal, – sub-kingdom, vertebrate, genus homo, and species, – "tropical American"; naturalists lay my habitat all over the world, and declare me omnivorous'.<sup>28</sup> He confidently claims that his habitat is all over the world, presumably, because he is free to roam the oceans with his ship. Yet it is the ship in itself that is more than a vaguely defined habitat – it is his nation.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 91-92, 209.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

Ships are ideal spaces to conduct political dissent, Gilroy argues, as they join the different points in the Atlantic world.<sup>29</sup> It is this space which allows Appadocca to, at least partially, subvert the racialised order the British Empire has created in the Caribbean by leading his own quasi-nation. This nation is both different from, and yet similar to the British Empire: it is a heterotopia. Michel Foucault defines heterotopias as 'real places [...] which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted'.<sup>30</sup> Alexandra Ganser reads the *Black Schooner* as a heterotopia of deviation, which both mirrors and inverts colonial relations, making it a heterotopia of crisis in terms of legitimacy of the colonial order.<sup>31</sup> This is supported by the conditions of entry for the heterotopia: only those who are deviant from society can become members of the crew. Those who are part of the colonial order are either set free (as with the captured priest and Agnes, or the fisher who is coerced into temporarily working for the pirates) or they are sent out to sea to die, as is the case with Appadocca's father, who is put on a barrel with some biscuits so he might perish slowly as Appadocca almost did when he refused to support him. It is only through luck that he does not die. Either way, as there is space for them in colonial society, there is no space for them on the ship.

I also read the *Black Schooner* as a heterotopic space of compensation, giving Appadocca the possibility to do what he cannot do on land, and in particular in Europe; namely be both a man of knowledge and a leader. This compensatory function of the ship is made even more explicit in the décor of Appadocca's cabin.

It was richly though peculiarly decorated: the sides [...] were made of the richest and most exquisitely polished mahogany, upon which were elaborately carved landscapes, in which nature was represented principally in her most terrible aspect, – with volcanoes belching forth their liquid fires; cataracts eating away in their angry mood the rugged granite, over whose uneven brows they were

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<sup>29</sup> Gilroy, pp. 16-17.

<sup>30</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', trans. by Jay Miskowicz, *Diacritics*, 16 (1986), 22–27 (p. 24).

<sup>31</sup> Alexandra Ganser, 'The Pirate Ship as a Black Atlantic Heterotopia: Michel Maxwell Philip's Emmanuel Appadocca', in *Contact Spaces of American Culture: Globalizing Local Phenomena*, ed. by Petra Eckhard, Klaus Rieser, and Silvia Schultersmandl, *American Studies in Austria*, 12 (Vienna: LitVerlag, 2012), pp. 51-76 (p. 55).



foamingly precipitated; inhospitable mountains frowning on the solitary waves below, that unheedingly lashed their base; chasms that yawned as terrific as the cataclysm that might be supposed to have formed them, and other subjects which blended the magnificent with the terribly sublime.<sup>32</sup>

The cabin also contains recreations of the celestial spheres as well as 'paleozoic creatures' that function as bookshelves.<sup>33</sup> There is also a magnificent telescope in the room. In effect, Appadocca has recreated land on his ship. The difference is that this time he is in control of it, and he can follow his scholarly pursuits, which became impossible in Europe. His replica is made up of jewels and precious metals, which he gained through his piracy.<sup>34</sup> His decoration makes literal his attempt at creating his own nation through a life of piracy, though it can only be achieved on a ship. It is also interesting to note that the sublime nature of this tableau contrasts greatly with the description of nature at other points in the novel. For example, describing the Bocas, islands near the northern passage from the Gulf of Paria between Trinidad and Venezuela, the narrator writes: 'those islands seem balancing over a crystal surface, that shines and sends forth a thousand undulating reflections under the pure and clear rays of an undarkened tropical sun'.<sup>35</sup> While the actual natural world is picturesque, the fake land is sublime. Perhaps it shows Appadocca's mixed feelings towards land, but it might also enhance his status, for it takes more to master the sublime than it does to master the picturesque.

What allows the ship to function as a heterotopia is its placement on the ocean, far removed from the laws of the land, or, in other words, other political communities. This becomes apparent during the trial that Appadocca holds for his father once he has captured him from another ship. He accuses Willmington of having broken the laws of nature, according to which he is responsible for his offspring, in Appadocca's reasoning. Willmington explains that people are not punished in society for what he did.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, it was not unusual for plantation owners to have their children enslaved, as mentioned in the preface, let alone to abandon them. So it is the racist colonial social order which

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<sup>32</sup> Philip, p. 22.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp. 22-23.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

makes it impossible for Appadocca to find a place in London. Willmington goes on defending himself by saying that according to the laws of the land, no man may conduct a trial on his own behalf in the way in which Appadocca is doing by making himself judge, jury and executioner.<sup>37</sup> However, Appadocca makes it very clear that the laws of the land do not apply on his ship:

'Look up there, man,' said the captain, as he pointed to the black flag that was floating gracefully from the half lowered gaff, 'while that flies there, there is no law on board this schooner save mine and great Nature's. Look around you, on the right and on the left, you see those who know no other laws but these two, and who are ready to enforce them. Look still farther around, you see but a waste of water, with no tribunals at hand, in which complaints may be heard, or by which grievances may be redressed. Place no hope, therefore on "the laws of the land".'<sup>38</sup>

Clearly, this suggests the presence of a type of law-making institution on the ship. In making this claim, Appadocca refuses to acknowledge that ships were not only what Lauren Benton calls 'islands of law', but also 'representatives of municipal legal authorities – vectors of law thrusting into ocean space'.<sup>39</sup> He does not represent any (other) nation's interests, insisting on his sovereignty.

Historically speaking, Benton explains, 'ships and their captains moved as delegated legal authorities along intersecting paths, extending corridors of control, in turn weakly or strongly associated with jurisdiction, into an interimperial sea space that could not be owned but could be dominated'.<sup>40</sup> While this leads Markus Rediker to call the ocean a commons, I have a less utopian understanding of this space, instead reading the ocean as an atopia, as described by Siobhan Carroll.<sup>41</sup> During the

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 112.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>41</sup> Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), p. 25; Siobhan Carroll, *An Empire of Air and Water: Uncolonizable Space in the British Imagination, 1750-1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015)

nineteenth century, spaces like the oceans or poles were depicted either as empty or as resistant to representation.<sup>42</sup> They were both central to the British Empire but also a challenge to imperial power, as they were by their very nature almost impossible to cultivate and hence to bring under imperial control. Atopias are “real” natural regions falling within the theoretical scope of contemporary human mobility, which, because of their intangibility, inhospitability, or inaccessibility, cannot be converted into the locations of affective habitation known as “place”.<sup>43</sup> There is no possibility of these spaces eventually becoming inhabited, they are forever outside the purview of the Empire. Hence, the ocean ‘could [...] offer an escape from the framework of the nation’.<sup>44</sup> Literature was one of the means, Carroll explains, by which mastery of the ocean was nonetheless attempted.<sup>45</sup>

*Emmanuel Appadocca* is one such attempt at mastery of the ocean, not by a British author but by a Caribbean one. In the text, Appadocca is initially clearly presented as a master of the ocean. For instance, he knows exactly how and when to leave his position in order to hunt the ship on which his father is sailing. He has also constructed a complex machinery of mirrors with which he can see beyond the horizon, enabling him to see his enemies while they cannot see him. He is overcoming the limits of human nature and those of conventional technology by improving on the standard looking glasses. His supreme knowledge is demonstrated once again when he predicts the arrival of a hurricane through calculations based on his understanding of the skies. The mastery of seafaring extends beyond Appadocca. The attitude of his first officer Lorenzo is described thus: ‘he whose daily life was a continuous challenge to man, to the powers that ruled the earth, and to the controlless element itself which he had made his home’.<sup>46</sup> The element might be out of human control, yet Lorenzo shows himself to be adept at navigating it.

Once Appadocca has been caught by the British on land, Lorenzo tries to free his captain by using his considerable navigational skills.<sup>47</sup> The Black Schooner keeps

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<sup>42</sup> Carroll, p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> Philip, pp. 81-82.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 142-145.

evading a pursuing British man-of-war because it is much faster and more manoeuvrable than the latter. Not only that, but the crew keeps taunting the pursuer by disguising the ship itself. The pirates camouflage their vessel as various ship-types and pass by the British ship again and again; the British always realise too late that they have just come across the pirates once more. At one point, the Black Schooner also hoists the Mexican flag, making clear how easily national affiliations can be changed and feigned on the ocean. The only one who sees through the disguise is an old seadog; his great experience has made him able to read ships. Finally, the Black Schooner even pretends to be an English wreck in order to lure in the British. Once an officer has gone aboard, the ship reveals itself and sails away: 'The metamorphosis was so sudden, that the schooner had already begun to move before the boatmen comprehended the change'.<sup>48</sup> Through what seems the ultimate failure at mastering the sea, namely shipwreck, the pirates actually once again demonstrate their superior skills.

It is the pirates who are masters of the ocean rather than the British man-of-war, as one might expect in a nautical adventure story. This underlines the challenge the novel is making to the British national identity, which, as outlined above, was greatly linked to power at sea. The man-of-war is in the Caribbean to fight the enemies of the Empire, as one of its officers explains.<sup>49</sup> It is a big war ship that should be able to eliminate all those who would dare trouble British interests in the region. Yet, while the officer specifically says that pirates are not amongst the enemies it is here to fight, ultimately, the only action the ship sees is against Appadocca and his crew.<sup>50</sup> Other empires are invoked only when it comes to trade. In St. Thomas, at that time under the rule of Denmark, ships from all over the world are at anchor in order to trade.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, the European powers support each other in policing the ocean, as can be seen when Appadocca is arrested there by 'a British officer, who was accompanied by an officer in the Danish civil uniform, that probably represented the local government in sanctioning the forcible capture of a British subject, by British authorities on Danish ground'.<sup>52</sup> Any skirmish with another European empire would ultimately only lead to a

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 149-150.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

shift but not an upheaval of imperial order. The only enemies are pirates and that is because they challenge the imperial order as such.

So, while Appadocca is described as a British subject in the passage quoted above, pirates, going back to Roman antiquity, had been considered *hostis humanis generis*, that is to say, enemies of all mankind. That makes them stand outside of any national affiliation. By the mid-nineteenth century, the golden age of piracy in the Caribbean – the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century – had long been over. The subtitle of the novel 'A Tale of the Boucaneers' makes reference to that time. Ganser states that, 'in fact, the buccaneers were Protestant hunters-settlers in the seventeenth century Caribbean on Tortuga and Hispaniola, who became anti-Spanish pirates when the Spanish colonists tried to drive them from their islands'.<sup>53</sup> The French term '*boucaniers*' is derived from the Arawak '*bukan*' which describes wooden crates for smoking meat, which is a technique the exiles learned from the natives.<sup>54</sup> This origin shows again the transnational scope of the Atlantic world, as well as the anti-imperial stance associated with the buccaneers. The term buccaneer had become a generic appellation for pirates by the 1800s. Ganser argues that Philip uses the term because it evokes notions of revenge and also avoids the stereotypes associated with pirates by the 1850s. Additionally, she claims it

Draws a parallel conflict between a colonial empire and its subalterns: first with regard to the predominantly poor settlers driven to piracy and to native peoples on the verge of genocide in the seventeenth century, and second, regarding disenfranchised African Americans in the nineteenth.<sup>55</sup>

The term is thus chosen with care to indicate not only the subaltern position vis-à-vis an empire, but also the resistance to it. Appadocca's crew is made up of men who either chose to break with 'human society' or were rejected as a result of a conflict within a fledgling nation-state.<sup>56</sup> Specifically, a number of them are French aristocrats, who were

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<sup>53</sup> Ganser, "The Pirate Ship", pp. 66-67.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 66-67.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Philip, pp. 43-44.

exiled in the wake of the French Revolution and fled to Saint Domingue.<sup>57</sup> Another's exile began in an earlier conflict: the chief officer Lorenzo reveals his identity at the end of the novel. His name is St. James Carmonte and his family had fought for 'the Prince', which probably refers to Bonnie Prince Charlie, the Stuart pretender to the British throne.<sup>58</sup> Lorenzo's family was forced to move around Europe, ending up in France, from where they were eventually expelled during the Revolution. Thus, the pirates are exiles who have come together on the Black Schooner to 'revenge [themselves] on the world'.<sup>59</sup>

The novel complicates the trope of piracy by accusing the European powers of the very same practice. Appadocca pours scorn on European colonialism, as it is driven by commerce and usually aimed at those who have done nothing to deserve it, declaring the entire system to be piratical: 'the whole of the civilized world turns, exists, and grows enormous on the licensed system of robbing and thieving'.<sup>60</sup> He does not consider his own actions to be wrong, because what he steals is ultimately based on the stolen labour of slaves and hence never belonged to the planters or merchants in the first place.<sup>61</sup> By this logic, the British and their ilk become the enemies of all of mankind, rather than the pirates. Piracy no longer happens in and against nations but is perpetuated by them.<sup>62</sup> Hence, Philip does not follow the notion of pirates as men without a nation. On the ship, Appadocca's crew forms a new type of nation that stands in contrast to the British empire, both in terms of who may be part of that nation, and its having its own set of rules as a quasi nation-state.<sup>63</sup> As mentioned above, a nation is a political community. To reiterate Smith's definition of such a community, it

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<sup>57</sup> As Christopher Taylor points out, the island is never called Haiti, though there are hints that the novel is set post-revolution. Christopher Taylor, *Empire of Neglect: The West Indies in the Wake of British Liberalism*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), p. 135.

<sup>58</sup> Philip, p. 247.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>62</sup> Though the difference between pirates and privateers who operated with a letter of marque, authorizing them to seize ships in the name of their sovereign, is not at all clear cut.

<sup>63</sup> Ficke, p. 125.

Implies at least some common institutions and a single code of rights and duties for all the members of the community. It also suggests a definite social space, a fairly well demarcated and bounded territory, with which the members identify and to which they feel they belong.<sup>64</sup>

As I will demonstrate, all of this holds true for the community forged on Appadocca's ship.

As outcasts, who at times specifically rejected the strict rules on navy or merchant ships, pirates had to form their own society on their ships, creating a code of rights and duties typical of a nation. Or as Appadocca puts it: 'there is no law on board this schooner save mine'.<sup>65</sup> In his seminal book *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age*, Rediker describes the organisation of pirate crews. Each crew drew up articles which included the hierarchy on the ship and the rules for the distribution of plunder and other resources. The captain retained his role by the grace of the crew who elected him. He was in charge when a prize was to be seized or when they were on the run. Otherwise, he had to bow to the majority. Pirates would sleep all over the ship; the captain did not have a cabin unto himself. Moreover, Rediker notes, 'The determined reorganization of space and privilege aboard the ship was crucial to the remaking of maritime social relations'.<sup>66</sup> However, as Appadocca's boast indicates, the crew on the Black Schooner is not entirely organised in this quasi-democratic manner. Appadocca was once elected as captain, as he claims, because of his superior character.<sup>67</sup> The democratic impulse is thus tempered by the idea of natural aristocracy that is typical of many Enlightenment thinkers.<sup>68</sup> Now, in keeping with an aristocratic model – his men call him 'excellency' – Appadocca's rule on the ship is absolute: 'I require but one thing – obedience. Death is the penalty of the least breach of discipline'.<sup>69</sup> This will to power is absolute and not only during battle. Yet, the narrator seems to indicate that this brutality is necessary, 'that the chain which was so variously formed, could be preserved

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<sup>64</sup> Smith, p. 9.

<sup>65</sup> Philip, p. 65.

<sup>66</sup> Rediker, pp. 64-65.

<sup>67</sup> Philip, p. 110.

<sup>68</sup> Paul A. Gilje, 'The Enlightenment at Sea in the Atlantic World', in *The Atlantic Enlightenment*, ed. by Susan Manning and Francis D. Cogliano (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), pp. 165-78 (p. 165).

<sup>69</sup> Philip, p. 25; *Ibid.*, p. 49.

only by a careful protection of each particular link'.<sup>70</sup> Because the crew members come from all over the world, only discipline can hold them together. Their unusual discipline also marks them out as proper gentlemen in spite of their status as pirates. The Enlightenment brought with it also a reform of manners; proper behaviour could be learned by anyone through education and personal discipline.<sup>71</sup> Of course, many of them had been aristocrats in their former lives, supporters of the status quo rather than change. Appadocca's counter-nation remains classist. Together with the racial attitudes towards black people explored earlier, this indicates that Appadocca's nation is far from utopian.

Yet, there is a social security system in place; protecting 'each particular link' also means setting up a system that allocates funds to those injured, just as the historical pirates did.<sup>72</sup> This is part of the system of rights that members of a nation enjoy. After the capture of a prize ship, there is a long scene in which the crew members receive their pay-out according to the injuries sustained.<sup>73</sup> In this strictly homosocial space, there is also a system of inheritance, in which each crew member can designate a friend, who receives his share of the prize should the crew member die. This quasi-legal system is not supported through bloodlines but through choice. It thus functions as an alternative to the familial bonds which were broken by Wilmington, and which Appadocca holds sacred. Yet, within his own space he is capable of envisaging an alternative system.

This inheritance system based on will rather than biology is a mirror to the contrast between the nation on the ship and the British nation. In the words of Smith, this is the contrast between a civic – based on will – and an ethnic – based on common ancestry – nation.<sup>74</sup> A civic nation, according to this model, is based on territory and formed through mass culture and politics. The ethnic model is based on birth and native culture. In reality, these two types of nationhood generally overlap. Until the 1820s and 1830s, Ficke explains, Britain was predominantly defined by a civic ideal.<sup>75</sup> This began

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>71</sup> Gilje, p. 166.

<sup>72</sup> Rediker, p. 73.

<sup>73</sup> Philip, pp. 46-48.

<sup>74</sup> Smith, pp. 11-13.

<sup>75</sup> Ficke, p. 118.



to change as there was an increasing discussion about an extension of political rights, which entailed the question of who the people of the nation were. Race, Patrick Wolfe argues, was used to restrict the expanding political rights to a specific group in spite of the Enlightenment claim to universality.<sup>76</sup> The Black Schooner does not use this category to restrict membership – though gender conceivably is used this way – thus it follows the ideal of a civic nation. It is based entirely on the territory of the ship and common politics, if you will: a hatred of the rest of the world. It is the only space in which a mixed-race man like Appadocca cannot only be a member but actually become the head of a nation of men who ‘simultaneously act[ed] as if they were but the individual members of only one single body moved but by one spirit’; or in other words, like Hobbes’ Leviathan.<sup>77</sup> They identify entirely with their nation.

Ultimately, however, Appadocca’s nation cannot survive. Atopias by their very nature cannot be conquered even within the imagination.<sup>78</sup> As an alternative, the pirate is presented with the possibility of a home on land, but he chooses to return to the ocean instead. After he escapes from the British man-of-war, Appadocca manages to swim to the coast of Venezuela where he is found by Llaneros, the herders inhabiting the steppe, who bring him to a ranch on the grassland. There, he is nursed back to health by the beautiful Feliciano, who implores him to give up piracy for her and to remain on the ranch. In *Empire of Neglect*, Christopher Taylor argues that texts like *Emmanuel Appadocca* are a reaction to a feeling of neglect by the Empire on the part of West Indians in the wake of economic liberalization. He argues that, ‘[t]he Americas emerged as an alternative horizon of political belonging that promised West Indians (and especially black West Indians) forms of political legibility and social care denied them in the liberalized empire’.<sup>79</sup> Thus, as Feliciano asks Appadocca to renounce his nation, she offers him a space in an independent Venezuela. He explains that while he might be able to return her feelings, he is bound to his vow of revenge against his father and there is no room for sentiment in a life such as his.<sup>80</sup> Taylor reads this decision

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<sup>76</sup> Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London: Verso, 2016), pp. 8-9.

<sup>77</sup> Philip, p. 193; Alexandra Ganser, *Crisis and Legitimacy in Atlantic American Narratives of Piracy: 1678-1865* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), p. 196.

<sup>78</sup> Carroll, p. 7.

<sup>79</sup> Taylor, p. 8.

<sup>80</sup> Philip, p. 181.

as stemming from a melancholic attachment to abandonment figured in his relationship with his father.<sup>81</sup> I would argue instead that Appadocca's mission to punish his father is about bringing order back to a world of disorder, that is to say, to make it a world in which family ties are not torn asunder by the racialised logic of the Atlantic world. He wants the universalist promise of the Enlightenment without the limitations of race.<sup>82</sup> That is why he cannot give up his mission of revenge.

Additionally, Appadocca is greatly attached to the ocean, apparent in his admiration of it as he returns to the Atlantic: 'Appadocca felt his sensibility deeply moved by the view which opened before him. The great Atlantic rolled heavily below [...] Appadocca could not refuse to his hear the pleasure of admiring such a scene'.<sup>83</sup> He knows that he can only be who he is on the ocean. Lorenzo, on the other hand, is able to return to the land. As previously explained, the first officer is the scion of a European family. After Appadocca's death, he inherits the title of captain. Going to search for help inland on Trinidad he comes across a plantation belonging to the father of Agnes, with whom he had previously fallen in love when she was a captive on the Black Schooner. He wants to marry her, but her father refuses.<sup>84</sup> Yet, as soon as he reveals his identity, the father agrees to the marriage as his family fought alongside Lorenzo's. Lorenzo stays on the plantation. He can do this because he is an exile, but white like others in power: the colonial order has a place of importance for him, even if it is at the periphery rather than within the metropolitan centre.

When the illusion of mastery over the atopic space of the ocean is revealed, it comes in the form of a typically Caribbean weather phenomenon: the hurricane. As discussed above, the fact that Appadocca knows the hurricane is coming is an indication of his mastery, but the hurricane brutally exposes its limits. Against his better knowledge, Appadocca is forced to leave the Gulf of Paria and sail into the open ocean as he is pursued by the British man-of-war after having kidnapped his father a second time, this time from Trinidad. For a while, it seems like the ship might brave the storm thanks to its captain: 'On – on she went, as if actuated by the bold spirit of the man

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<sup>81</sup> Taylor, p. 143.

<sup>82</sup> This also showcases how the ethnic and the civic ideal of the nation are very rarely completely separate, but usually overlap in some form.

<sup>83</sup> Philip, p. 185.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., pp. 247-248.

who commanded her, she sought to penetrate the very bosom of the hurricane'.<sup>85</sup> The storm seems almost sublime, and Appadocca 'seem[s] to take pleasure in the terrible convulsions of nature'.<sup>86</sup> However, unlike the sublime image of nature in his cabin, actual sublime nature is beyond his control. Ultimately, the ship is dashed on the rocks before Trinidad and sinks. Some of the pirates, including Appadocca and Lorenzo, manage to save themselves. Willmington, however, is trapped on the ship and drowns. In that moment, Appadocca has attained his goal of revenging himself against his father but simultaneously loses his nation. Yet, he once again chooses the ocean rather than land. He tells Lorenzo to use his buried treasure to build an orphanage and give the rest to his men. In a letter to his friend Charles, he had explained the future he wanted for his men:

I shall lead the men [...] to some remote spot on the fertile and vast continent that lies on our right, and build them a city in which they may live happily, quietly, and far removed from the world, whose sympathy they cannot hope, and care not, to possess.<sup>87</sup>

He had also indicated that he would not be part of that city. Instead, in the wake of the hurricane, Appadocca jumps into the water, committing suicide. He knows there is no room for him on land to be who he wants to be, not only part of a nation but a leader of that nation. His defiance has not fundamentally shaken the colonial order. Once his ship is gone, so is his possibility to have a nation outside the purview of the British Empire. It is unclear whether the British man-of-war survived the storm, but either way, there are always more British ships to attempt to rule the waves.

*Emmanuel Appadoca* is thus a novel that writes back to the metropolitan centre with the aim of imagining a new order. This order takes the form of a proto-nation made up of pirates. Pirates are the ideal figures for this counter-imaginary because they stand outside society, challenging its structure. The ships on which they move function as heterotopic spaces, on an ocean that may be dominated by empires but ultimately cannot be mastered due to its atopic nature. By presenting a nation in which the mixed-

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 239.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 236.

race Appadocca is not only a fully-fledged member but actually a leader, Philip partially challenges the racialised Atlantic order, while reiterating it in other ways. Yet even within literature, the ocean remains untameable, and the type of nation imagined is ultimately unsustainable.



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