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The Hero and the Sea: Sea Captains and their Discontents

Claire Jowitt

Understanding early modern sea captains

- 1 It was only at the end of the sixteenth century that the English nation seriously attempted for the first time to express ambitions for an empire to rival those of Spain in the west (in the New World) and of the Ottomans in the east.¹ A series of bulls issued by Pope Alexander VI, ratified by the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494, had carved up the known and unknown worlds between Spain and Portugal, thereby debarring other nations from trade in the New World. In the Treaty of Saragossa of 1529, a new line of demarcation in the Pacific split the control of lands in this region between Spain and Portugal. The response of European nations excluded from colonial and imperial expansion, valuable natural resources, and trading opportunities, was to both plunder and seek ways to break the monopoly through actual and textual activities.² Sea captains were at the vanguard of the response to secure what the English believed to be the nation's share of territory and trade, and their activities are central to written accounts of explorations and adventures.
- 2 For Englishmen, according to Elias Canetti in *Crowds and Power* (1960), the figure of the sea captain was a "remarkably stable" national self-identity that endured for generations: "[t]he Englishman sees himself as a captain on board a ship with a small group of people, the sea around and beneath him. He is almost alone; as captain he is in many ways isolated from his crew" (171). Canetti describes how this isolated male figure, personified by his ship, imposed his "absolute" and "undisputed" "power of command" on a sea that is "there to be ruled," and how the sea captain provided a powerful collective vision and symbol of how Englishmen should behave and interact with others (171). In this article, I test the validity of Canetti's analysis in relation to accounts of English sea captaincy of the "long 1590s." Defined as the period between the defeat of the Armada in 1588 and the death of Elizabeth in 1603, "it was the formative decade for the shaping of English literary

and historiographical self-consciousness, and left an aesthetic legacy that underpinned literary endeavour and notions of literary value for well over a century” (Connolly and Hopkins, “Preface: the Long 1590s”). More precisely, at the end of the sixteenth century England was attempting to increase and announce its presence within a global economy through a marked uptick in actual overseas activities, and by announcing and consolidating, as well as inspiring further achievement, through the dissemination of written accounts of exploration. To address the sea captain’s role in these processes, in this article I discuss first the importance of the execution in contested circumstances of Thomas Doughty, on the orders of Francis Drake on the first English circumnavigation, for understanding more generally the values and practice of leadership at sea. However, my focus is chiefly on the significance of the murky circumstances of the death of England’s celebrated second circumnavigator, Sir Thomas Cavendish, and the fractious conditions on board that led to it, for analysing “the power of command,” to use Canetti’s phrase. Richard Hakluyt included an account Drake’s voyage in both editions of *The Principal Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589; 2nd revised and expanded edition 1598/99-1600, with the title of the latter promising information about the nation’s “traffiques”),³ and he published an account of Cavendish’s failed circumnavigation in the later edition. Versions of the voyages printed by Hakluyt are the focus here. Hakluyt’s collection, which included over 600 accounts of individual voyages in the expanded, second edition, and ran to over 1.75 million words, is emblematic of the scope of England’s global ambitions in the long 1590s. Drake never himself wrote an account of his circumnavigation, though a handful of versions of events by his crew survive (Quinn “Early Accounts” 33-48). Cavendish wrote his narrative of shipboard actions just before his death, with other crew members writing accounts of the voyage on return, in the knowledge of Cavendish’s manuscript (Edwards 34, 40, 43).⁴ On both voyages, the sea captain’s “power of command” is tested and strained, and each faces hazardous and extreme challenges to his leadership.

- 3 Of course, the question begged by Canetti’s analysis is can the sea, or indeed the ship’s crew, ever really be ruled “absolutely” by the ship’s captain? Given the innumerable shipwrecks and millions of deaths at sea that traverse human history, claims of “mastering the sea” are, of course, rhetorical rather than actual.⁵ Yet, nevertheless, the vocabulary of command is pervasive in literary and historical accounts. In this article, I explore the ways a sea captain implicitly or explicitly claims undisputed power, but also how these claims are simultaneously debated and contested, as well as why these particular issues emerged in such an insistent way at the end of the sixteenth century. As we shall see, a more complex, multivalent, and historically specific relationship emerges than allowed by Canetti’s confident statement about sea captains’ connections to English self-identity and heroic prowess over the *longue durée*.
- 4 It is easy to see Canetti’s model of heroic power in action in triumphalist nineteenth-century accounts of sea captains from England’s imperial and colonial past.⁶ Even illustrations from children’s lullabies, and of women, received heroic treatment at times, with for example Alma Strettell including in *Lullabies of Many Lands* (1894) a drawing of an Elizabethan ship in full sail. On a ship named the *England*, Queen Elizabeth captains from the stern. The queen imperiously points the way forward for the ship (of state) and the nation, metonymically represented by three male figures under her sway, positioned beneath her under her command, like the vessel/nation.

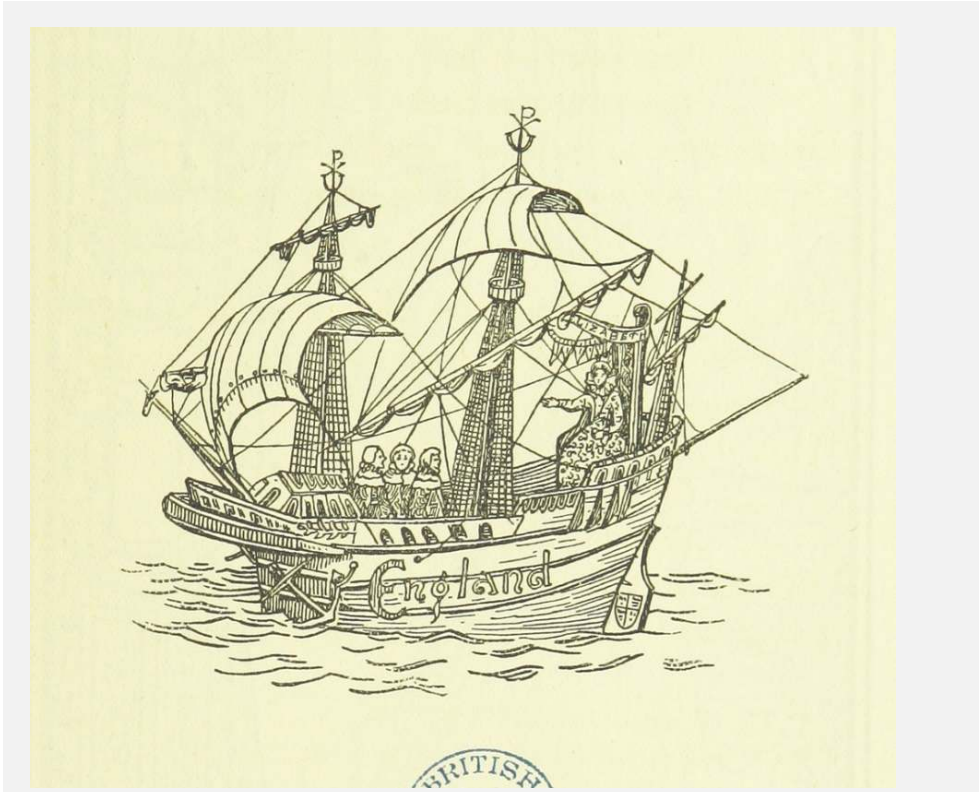


Fig. 1. Illustration by Emily J. Harding in Alma Stretting, *Lullabies of Many Lands: Collected and Rendered into English Verse* (London: George Allen, 1894), p.117.

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- 5 A key articulation, often cited, from English imperial and colonial history of what Canetti termed sea captains' "power of command" are the claims J. A. Froude made for England's nautical history in 1852. He famously described Hakluyt's *The Principal Navigations* as "the prose epic of the modern English nation" in *The Westminster Review* (34). Accounts of English sea captains' seaborne male fortitude, power, and heroism certainly are central to *The Principal Navigations*. Indeed Hakluyt wrote at the beginning of the 1589 edition that it aimed to rouse the English from their "sluggish security" to emulate the achievements of "other nations miraculously extolled for their discoveries and notable enterprises by sea," with sea captains at the vanguard (Hakluyt 2r).⁷ Yet, though the narratives Hakluyt included in the collection do repeatedly show sea captains supporting Elizabethan expansionist policies abroad, defending the nation in times of war, and providing a model of patriotic manhood, they behave less than heroically at least as often.⁸ Both editions of the collection frequently include accounts of bitter disputes between leading participants for control over the direction of a voyage. Rarely are arguments resolved amicably: instead, there are numerous descriptions of fierce debate, desertion, mutiny, execution, violence, and even murder.
- 6 Drake, England's first circumnavigator notoriously executed his sometime friend and fellow commander Thomas Doughty for mutiny and treason in 1578 while on the voyage. Doughty, as Sir Christopher Hatton's private secretary, was well connected, and Hatton was one of the investors in the voyage (Kelsey 75, 82). Hakluyt published the first detailed account of the circumnavigation in the 1589 edition of *The Principal Navigations*, having had to edit and redact his sources quickly, most likely the journal of the chaplain Francis

Fletcher, who was hostile to Drake, having been “excommunicated” by him in the wake of Doughty’s execution (Kelsey 393).⁹ Indeed, the justice of the execution and Drake’s authority and right-to-command it were widely questioned both at the time of the trial and on the ship’s return to England, and it cast a long shadow on Drake’s subsequent career (Kelsey 80-110; Quinn, *Sir Francis Drake* 4-5). Moreover, in terms of the incident’s larger significance, the execution of Doughty by Drake is a watershed moment in maritime history, and a crucial one for the issues explored in this article. Drake’s killing of his one-time friend imposed for the first time the absolute authority of one individual as sole master of the ship. As John Cooke commented in his “Narrative,” when the fleet left England “Francys Drake, John Winter and Thomas Doughtie” were “eqwall companyons and frindly gentlemen” (Penzer 142; Kelsey 98). Yet by executing Doughty so ruthlessly, Drake, the “tarpaulin officer,” (i.e. a sea-bred superior officer) categorically established his chain of command over his social superiors, the gentlemen officers (i.e. elite military officers appointed to command). This was a remarkable shift, turning on its head the established seafaring custom that masters should consult the elite officers at sea. According to medieval maritime law, such as the twelfth-century compilation *Rôles d’Oléron*, masters should refer to their companies, and vestiges of this custom survived in English ships into the sixteenth century.¹⁰ Winter and Doughty, and the other socially elite officers onboard, expected to be part of Drake’s council as a matter of course, rather than treated as his subordinates.¹¹ Drake’s execution of Doughty established a precedent for the idea that one captain is sole master on a voyage. The effects of this change had important ramifications and, indeed, perhaps this event and moment in history marks the emergence of the ideology of the absolute “power of command” of English sea captains, as summarized by Canetti. Certainly, Drake’s actions, I argue, influence onboard fleet politics and behaviour on the voyage of his seafaring successor, the second English circumnavigator, Cavendish.

Changing definitions: professionalizing leadership at sea

- 7 An equally dramatic argument took place on Cavendish’s last tragic voyage, his attempted second circumnavigation, which departed from Plymouth in August 1591 and on which he lost his life in disputed circumstances. My focus is on answering how and why the “power of command,” though claimed by Cavendish as “Captain Generall” (the person in overall command of a force at sea and on land) as absolute, were so bitterly contested on this particular voyage. More broadly, I explore the implications of shipboard events for understanding major and significant shifts in the role of the sea captain in this period.
- 8 The third volume of the second edition of *The Principal Hakluyt* included an account of the voyage by John Jane, an experienced sailor and close associate of Cavendish’s third in command on the voyage, John Davis, the experienced navigator and seaman. The 1591 fleet consisted of “three tall ships and two barks” says Jane, all privately owned, and which cost Cavendish the immense sum of approximately £13,000 to fit out (Jane 842). The large ships were the *Galleon Leicester* (400 tons, admiral of the fleet and carrying Cavendish), the *Roebucke* (240 tons, vice-admiral, captained by John Cocke, Cavendish’s relative); the *Desire* (120/140 tons, rear admiral, Cavendish’s former flagship, and veteran of his earlier circumnavigation and now captained by Davis). The two smaller ships were the *Dainty* or *Delight* (captained by Randolph Cotton, close friend of Davis and co-owned

by Davis), and the *Black Pinnace* (captained probably by Tobias Parris/Paris) (Edwards 23). Davis had agreed to sail with Cavendish on the understanding that he could explore for the western end of the northern passage once the fleet reached California. Cavendish's voyage was likely to appeal to Davis, since his lifelong aim was to find a navigable shorter passage to China by sailing North West, North, or North East – thus opening the East to the West.

Thomas Cavendish



Fig. 2 Engraving by Crispin van de Passe from *Effigies Regum ac Principum* (1598). The legend from *The Aeneid* "EXTREMOS PUDEAT REDISSE" ("It would be shameful to return last of all") may be an allusion to Cavendish's refusal to return with dishonour or, alternatively, an attack on Davis, who did return last in June 1593 on the *Desire* (the *Galleon* had arrived in February of March).

<http://www.geheugenvannederland.nl/nl/geheugen/view?coll=ngvn&identifier=BVB01%3ABDH19058PK>. Available via Wikimedia Commons

- 9 It was by any standards a tragic and unsuccessful voyage – of the 350 or so men who departed in 1591, at least two-thirds died. Yet the principals and their supporters fiercely contested what actually happened at sea, and why, as well as where the blame lay for failure. By the time Hakluyt printed Jane's account, he was almost certainly aware that Cavendish had written a narrative of events shortly before he died (Quinn *Hakluyt Handbook* II 458). It may have simply have been that Hakluyt was unable to get hold of Cavendish's manuscript (Quinn, *The Last Voyage* 45),¹² since he would surely have taken an eager interest in his version of events since his late wife, Douglas Cavendish Hakluyt, who died in 1597, was most probably first cousin to the circumnavigator (Miyuki Ota Hollis 45).¹³ His connections to Davis and Jane, though, were also strong. In both editions of *The Principal Navigations*, Hakluyt included multiple accounts of their northern explorations, including in the 1589 edition narratives about all three of Davis's 1580s arctic missions,

two written by Jane, and one by Davis himself, and Hakluyt amplified and extended the northern material further in the second edition (Fuller 15-29).

- 10 In what follows, I explore how the semantic contest for the “power of command” played out on Cavendish’s last voyage. In other words, I focus on the vocabulary used by key protagonists to describe each other’s positions, how they question and challenge the power of command, including what the terminology of command reveals more broadly about the changing values of leadership at sea at this time. The meanings of “generall,” “captain,” and “master” (in Jane’s account all three terms describe different individuals amongst the expedition’s leaders) were evolving rapidly at this time. My larger argument is that changing terminology and meanings are reflective and constitutive of the ways leadership roles themselves were in process of redefinition to suit new requirements and values emergent in English overseas expansionism at the end of the sixteenth century, particularly regarding the professionalization of seamanship.
- 11 The “Generall” in Jane’s account, short-form of “Captain-General,” was not a specifically amphibious role but a gubernatorial one, and the term used solely to describe Cavendish on the expedition. It was also a term that was beginning to diminish in reputation and respect at this time, as other terms were used more regularly to describe the commander in chief.¹⁴ According to Cooke’s “Narrative”, Doughty bitterly used the term “Generall” to refer Drake, as he questioned his authority over him and the other gentlemen officers, and it is noticeable that here, and in Jane’s account it is the specifically military aspect of the role, i.e. the term “general” not “captain,” that is used as its short-form (Penzer 150). Martin Frobisher was also the “Generall” in published accounts of his 1578 voyage north to “Meta Incognita,” when his armada of fifteen ships returned with twelve hundred tons of valueless pyrites believing it to be gold ore, an outcome that damaged his reputation for some years, indicating perhaps the declining prestige of the term (MacDermott 153-62). Possibly even more significant in 1590s England, with the nation at war with Spain, “Capitán General” was the favoured title of the Iberian nations for their commanders and colonial leaders after the conquest of America. Indeed, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the two main naval captain general posts were *Capitán-General de la Armada de la Mar Oceana* and *Capitán-General de Galeras*, with responsibility for the Atlantic and the Mediterranean respectively, and the term was particularly associated with colonial rule of the military and administrative divisions in Spanish America and the Spanish Philippines.¹⁵ Following the publication in 1583 of an English translation of Bartolomé de las Casas’s *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (published in Spanish in 1552), depicting the inhumane treatment that the indigenous people endured during the early stages of the Spanish conquest, English colonial ambitions were redefined and amplified. The English used the resulting so-called “Black Legend” of anti-Spanish propaganda to justify their own expansionism in moral and theological terms, by claiming to refuse worship from the indigenous peoples encountered, unlike Spanish explorers, for instance (Hodgkin 85). The gradual decline in the English use of “Captain General,” the term favoured in the Spanish New World, was thus part of an English desire to assert distinct colonial ambitions, behaviour, and even terminology, especially with the nations at war.
- 12 The term “captain” was also changing in meaning in England at the end of the sixteenth century, as it began to be used amphibiously more regularly, to mean the commander at sea, and/or the legal superior at sea and/or chief navigation officer at sea. It was a term particularly used by privateers and, less frequently, by merchant commanders. In the

English Navy, or “navy royal,” the term “captain” described a specifically military role at sea, with “master mariners” taking care of the actual navigation. The English navy, however, was not a large force and did not have a permanent body of officers or seamen as the shape of the amphibious defence force against the Armada in 1588 graphically reveals; of the 226 ships mustered, only 34 were Queen’s ships, with the rest privately owned (Friel, “Elizabethan Merchant Ships”). The *OED* dates the first usage of “captain” to mean commander of the ship to 1555, when Richard Eden translated Peter Martyr of Angleria’s *Decades of the Newe Worlde* “This capitayne Wyndam, puttyng furth of his shyp at Porchmouth.”¹⁶ Certainly, Thomas Wyndham, instrumental in establishing the Barbary and Guinea trades, was a well-known privateer as well as a merchant (Andrews 61-62). The *Middle English Dictionary* entry dates the first usages of the term as referring to the commander of troops fighting on the ship earlier, to the middle of the fifteenth century.¹⁷ In other words, by the turn of the seventeenth century, the more diminutive form of “captain” was starting to emerge as the dominant, and favoured, term to describe the man-in-charge at sea. Certainly, in accounts of Davis’s 1580s three arctic fleets that set out in search of the Northwest Passage, Jane only uses the term “Captain” to describe Davis’s position within each expedition’s fleet of ships, never “Generall.” Given that Davis was actually in effect performing the role of “Captain General” for the Arctic fleets, Jane’s use of “Captain” for him but “Generall” for Cavendish when in an analogous role on the latter’s attempt at a second circumnavigation, signals Jane’s greater respect for the first half of the term.

- 13 With this evolving terminology of leadership in mind, what exactly happened on Cavendish’s voyage, and in what ways is it reflective of changing values associated with the performance of effective command at sea? Cavendish’s fleet sought to reach China and Japan via Cape Horn, and he wished to repeat his highly profitable earlier circumnavigation, which had left unfinished business because the small size of its ships had meant Cavendish had been unable to carry home to England all the captured treasure (Petty 819-22). By 1591, Cavendish was in straightened circumstances financially, and to avoid repeating his past mistake, he deliberately took larger ships on the new voyage in order not to have to leave behind treasure.

Cavendish (on the right, shown with Drake (centre) and John Hawkins (left) in *Great St Anna* pearls.



Fig. 3. This painting is probably a copy of Daniel Myten's painting of the same subject which was owned by Lord Lothian. Seventeenth-century British School.

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- 14 Cavendish's desire for bigger ships led to a crucial, and fatal, inflexibility in the expedition: smaller ships could have secured supplies from hostile ports with barred harbours on both America's Western and Eastern seaboard. When the fleet dispersed well before reaching the Pacific, having failed to pass through the Magellan Strait, and split up in contested circumstances, following a bitter dispute concerning authority over course and direction, Cavendish was left with only large ships, the *Galleon Leicester* and the *Roebuck*. Davis made it back to England the following year in the small vessel, the *Desire*; this was a ship essential to the success of the overall mission, and hence Davis suffered for this rest of his career from the charge that he had deserted Cavendish.
- 15 So what was at stake in the argument over direction and command? After leaving Plymouth, the fleet was first becalmed for nearly four weeks, and then diverted to Santos in Brazil to re-provision, missing the southern summer, the best time to clear the Magellan Strait. Beset by storms, frost, and high mortality on the biggest ships, Cavendish was unable to pass the Strait, and gave up, planning instead to take the Good Hope route to the East Indies. Davis, more accustomed to Arctic conditions, was undeterred: "our captain" says Jane "because he was a man that had good experience [...] told him [Cavendish] that this snow was a matter of no long continuance" (Jane 843). Put another way, the experienced professional mariner "Captain" Davis tells the anxious, apparently inexperienced "Generall" Cavendish good advice that conditions at sea were likely to improve. Of course, since Cavendish had passed through the Strait of Magellan on his circumnavigation, and Davis had never successfully navigated it, Jane's description of

Captain Davis as the man with the authority of experience is both disingenuous and, perhaps, designed to provoke the “Generall.” Yet, implicit in Jane’s account is the struggle between tarpaulin and socially elite officers. Davis’s social background is obscure as, connected to the Devon-based maritime Gilbert family, he “reputedly spent his youth in maritime pursuits, the necessary training for a professional seaman, almost certainly in subordinate and unrecorded capacities on the Gilberts’ major voyages,” while Cavendish, ten-years younger, was both rich and much better connected, though a notorious spendthrift (ODNB).

- 16 After further argument, and against Davis’s advice, Cavendish then withdrew north to Santos again, and Davis remained at Port Desire, perhaps because of a misunderstanding or perhaps, as the close-to-death Cavendish claimed in his last letter, from self-interested betrayal – “onely [his] treacherie hath beene the utter ruine of all,” Cavendish claimed (Hitchcock, Charges 264). In fact, contrary to Davis’s later testimony, Cavendish did in fact specify a rendezvous, confirmed in a third account of the voyage by Anthony Knyvett, also published by Purchas in 1625 (Edwards 90). Knyvett was a gentleman officer on the *Galleon Leicester* and was no particular supporter of Cavendish, since, due to frostbite, Cavendish had wanted to put him ashore to take his chances in the freezing conditions of the Strait of Magellan. In fact, Davis was well aware that Cavendish needed the smaller vessels, which alone were able to enter shallow waters; without them, Cavendish was destined to fail. Evidently, Davis’s own crew also appreciated the significance of the *Desire* for the success of the circumnavigation, as only a little over half of them backed his decision when asked for their support, while others mutinied and, Jane recounts, unsuccessfully plotted to kill him.
- 17 Separated and bereft of stores, Davis’s outlook on the *Desire* was poor; he nevertheless made three further efforts to pass the Strait, but storms beat him back each time. Finally, after returning to Port Desire on 27 October 1592, Davis provisioned the ship with approximately 14,000 dried penguins for the journey home. Despite losing men in skirmishes with Patagonian Indians and the Portuguese, and privations, Davis himself was among the fourteen survivors of the original complement of seventy-five who arrived home on 11 June 1593. Subjected to an inquiry ordered by the privy council into his conduct on the evidence of Cavendish’s last letter, Davis defended himself against the charges – he says in the dedication of his manual *The Seaman’s Secrets* (1595) to the Lord High Admiral “were I faulty of so foul a crime, I were worthy of ten thousand torments” (Edwards 88). Davis was released, though his reputation suffered, despite Hakluyt’s inclusion of the version of events most sympathetic to him.
- 18 One of the most noticeable features of the fleet was its unusual demographic make-up, and this is crucial to explaining the voyage’s fractious nature, and the contradictory accounts it generated. According to Nathaniel Butler’s book on seamanship *Botelier’s Dialogues* (1634), expeditions were recommended to crew a vessel at the rate of one crewmember (i.e. sailor) per every four tons up to 400 tons, after which there should be one crewmember for every three tons (Hitchcock Purposes 6). On the *Desire*, it seems there were twenty-eight sailors when thirty-five were needed to crew the 140-ton vessel; in addition, there were on board forty-seven “gentlemen.” According to Jane, Davis argued against changing course for the Cape of Good Hope (i.e. the route Cavendish wanted) because there were not enough experienced sailors: “among seventie and five persons, there is but the Master alone that can order the Shippe, and but fourteene saylers. The rest are gentlemen, serving men and artificers” (Jane 843). Indeed, on

Cavendish's fleet in general, the number of crew was small, and it is clear from Cavendish's, Jane's, and from Knyvett's accounts that of the 350 total ships' company, approximately sixty per cent were gentlemen. In other words, to accommodate the large numbers of gentlemen on board, the number of experienced sailors had been significantly cut.

- 19 This demographic would undoubtedly have led to tension, especially in times of bad weather, sickness, physical attack, or privation, which were especially frequent of this expedition. Though on Elizabethan ships the sailors were meant to fight, and the soldiers were supposed to undertake shipboard work (unlike on Spanish ships where a division of duties between soldiers and sailors was maintained), it is clear that on Cavendish's fleet "gentlemen" did not work (Knyvett confirms that he took no part in shipboard tasks, even before his frostbite). Since the low number of sailors on the expedition was Cavendish's decision, Davis uses it to argue it limits the options for the fleet's course, as, he says, fourteen sailors is inadequate to sail it. With such a demographic, soldiers, underemployed on-board ship, were likely to pressurise key decisions to favour their pillaging opportunities (particularly as privateering voyages did not pay wages, but a share of the "thirds," or profits), or, worse, to foment mutiny.
- 20 Neither Davis nor Cavendish were successful in controlling their shipboard company. Both faced mutiny following key decisions, when they struggled to exert their authority. Cavendish's best chance of success on the voyage was continuing to try to pass the Strait when Davis said he should. Once this opportunity was lost, the large size of his ships and the lack of sailors on them meant Cavendish was always likely to fail on the Cape of Good Hope route. Likewise, because Davis was captain of Cavendish's old ship, with many of his old crew, who remained loyal to their previous leader, they blamed Davis for losing Cavendish. However, by choosing to print Jane's account Hakluyt appears to be prioritizing the views and ethos of the professional sailor, or tarpaulin captain, during on-board arguments. We do not know the reasons why Hakluyt only included Jane's account in *The Principal Navigations*, but the decision certainly emphasizes the key importance of following the command of the sailor as represented by the tarpaulin captain/master, rather than the soldier (or "Generall"). In other words, the implication is that the advice of the experienced professional seaman rather than a talented amateur is more likely to advance England's imperial and colonial agenda. In 1992, Richard Helgerson argued Hakluyt prioritized the activities of merchants, rather than aristocrats, as the instruments for successful English overseas expansion: "Hakluyt's *Voyages* does represent [...] a fundamentally new alignment of power in England [...] in which merchants and mercantile activity had an ever increasing share" (Helgerson 181). Hakluyt's privileging of the professional sailor represents a nuanced version of this dynamic. In other words, for Hakluyt the sort of seaman most likely to progress England's overseas enterprise were professional sea captains. Furthermore, as Hakluyt made clear in the "Preface to the Reader" of the first volume of the second edition, it was in their northern expeditions, such as the ones Davis favoured, that the English could rival, and better, the achievements of other European nation states had enjoyed from their American or Indian explorations.

[W]ill it not in all posteritie be as great a renowme unto our *English* nation, to have bene the first discoverers of a Sea beyond the *North Cape* (never certainly knowen before) and of a convenient passage into the huge Empire of *Russia* [...] as for the *Portugales* to have found a Sea beyond the Cape of *Bueno Esperanza*, and so consequently a passage by Sea into the east *Indies*, or for the *Italians* and *Spaniards* to

have discovered unknown lands so many hundred leagues westward and southwestward [...]. (Hakluyt Preface 2nd edn.)

In other words, for Hakluyt, a professional seaman like Davis was the man most likely to achieve the type of success in Northern navigation, exploration, and trade that he sought for England as “first discoverers.” It seems therefore to have been a deliberate decision on Hakluyt’s part to privilege “Captain” Davis over “General” Cavendish. Certainly, Hakluyt’s naming of Jane in the title of the account as “a man of good observation” endorses the latter’s authority, as does his highlighting of Jane’s long and successful maritime experience with Davis in Northern voyages “imployed in the same, and many other voyages” (Jane 842). Maritime experience and strategic purpose forge a “captain” at sea for Hakluyt and after, it seems rather than simply wealth or bravura, or military success.

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ENDNOTES

1. For discussion see, for example, Hadfield; and Jowitt, *The Culture of Piracy*.
2. Scholarship on this topic is immense, but for a useful overview see Pagden, *Lords of all the World*.
3. The second expanded edition drops the second "l" from "principall;" for ease and economy of words, and as I am discussing both editions in this essay often at the same time, Hakluyt's text is always termed *The Principal Navigations*.
4. Cavendish's account was first published in 1625 by Samuel Purchas in *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes*.
5. For a *longue durée* history of the Mediterranean Sea, see Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, passim.
6. The historiography on nineteenth-century imperialism is too large to be exhaustively cited here; for a brisk, recent overview see Porter, *British Imperial*.
7. For a fuller discussion of Hakluyt's work see Payne, *Richard Hakluyt*; Mancall, *Hakluyt's Promise*; Carey and Jowitt, *Richard Hakluyt and Travel Writing*.
8. For discussion, see Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*; Smith, *Shakespeare and Masculinity*, 39-66.
9. For an account of Hakluyt's struggles to get an account of Drake's circumnavigation into print, and other contemporary reactions to it, see Quinn, "Early Accounts" 33-48.
10. See Frankot, "Medieval Maritime Law," 151-72.
11. "When medieval knights embarked, ships' masters did their bidding, and that was another custom of which the vestiges still survived: Sir Hugh Willoughby, for example, was a gentleman and a knight but not a seaman, and the practical seamen were his subordinates." See Caine, <[http://academia.wikia.com/wiki/Journal_of_History_and_Classics:_Doubting_Thomas:_the_Dought_\(ie\)_Affair_in_Fictive_History_and_Historical_Fiction](http://academia.wikia.com/wiki/Journal_of_History_and_Classics:_Doubting_Thomas:_the_Dought_(ie)_Affair_in_Fictive_History_and_Historical_Fiction)>

12. Quinn suggests that Hakluyt acquired Cavendish's manuscript later, and then passed to Purchas. It may simply have been that Hakluyt was unable to get hold of the manuscript before the second edition of *The Principal Navigations* was published, as the narrative was "written with his [i.e. Cavendish's] owne hand to Sir Tristram Gorges his Executor," as Purchas put it when he published it in *Purchas His Pilgrimes* in 1625. Certainly, Cavendish's estate was not settled until 4 February 1596, when probate on it was finally granted. The reasons for the delay is unknown: Quinn, in his edition of the Cavendish's account and will, suggests that the Privy Council may have withheld the documents until Cavendish's charges against Davis had "been finally disposed of [...]" See *The Hakluyt Handbook*, II, 458; Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, vol. 4, bk. Vi. 1192; Quinn, *The Last Voyage*, 41.

13. Some sources indicate that Douglas Hakluyt was Cavendish's sister. See Miyuki Ota Hollis, "The Social Navigations," 45. Cavendish's will states "if my saide Executor shall finde. (him self & all other duties being satisfied) any ouerplus of the saide goodes remaining to my sister Anne Caundish to be vnto her as her owne proper goodes," but there is some confusion regarding the identity Anne Cavendish. Robert Dudley, illegitimate son of the Earl of Leicester, who took at letters of administration in March 1593 for the goods of Thomas Cavendish, was the husband of Cavendish's sister, but sources disagree concerning whether her name was Margaret or Anne Cavendish. Margaret Cavendish was Douglas Cavendish's sister, and hence it is unclear whether Hakluyt was Thomas Cavendish's cousin-by-marriage, or his brother-in-law.

14. <<http://www.oed.com.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2048/view/Entry/27622>>

15. For discussion of the development of the Spanish New World, including its administration, see J. H. Elliot, *Spain and Its World*; Henry Kamen, *Empire*.

16. <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/27616>> See also the definition in Smyth's *Sailor's Word-Book* "the officer commanding a line-of-battle ship, or a frigate carrying twenty or more cannon." The "captain-general" is the "highest army rank," 161-62.

17. <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/medidx?type=id&id=MED6722&egs=all>> " There shulde be chosen and nempned viii of Knyghtes and worthy Swyers of the West, of the South, and of the North..and yerof the Kyng, oure Soueraigne Lord, chese suche on as hym liketh to be a chief Capytayne, and other vii..for to attende the saide chief Capytayne; so that every grete Shippe have a Capytayne withynne borde," (1442) *Rolls of Parliament*.

ABSTRACTS

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AUTHOR

CLAIRE JOWITT

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