

I

FOUNDATIONS
Pacific Exploration
Before Cook

I. The World Beyond Europe

An expedition to the South Pacific, sponsored by the Crown in the name of scientific discovery, was an unprecedented step and a notable example of the interest in science and geography growing throughout Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century. But the desire for political and economic gain and the lure of the exotic, the unspoken motives of Cook's voyage, were centuries old.

European explorers had been venturing forth in search of new lands for nearly three hundred years, driven primarily by the desire for riches, either in the form of new trade routes or new lands that might prove to be sources of wealth. Their voyages revolutionized Europeans' understanding of world geography, discovering North and South America, charting the coasts of Asia and Africa, and dispelling myths about boiling temperatures near the equator and ferocious sea monsters in distant parts of the ocean.

England, Spain, Portugal, and France had all established colonies in the New World, and voyages across the Atlantic and around the Cape of Good Hope to Asia and the East Indies had become almost routine. But the Pacific remained largely unknown apart from its perimeter (a few Spanish outposts struggled along on the west coast of South America, and trading ships occasionally visited

ports on the mainland of Asia), and ships crossing the Pacific were mostly Spanish trading vessels plying a well-established route from the Philippines to Acapulco. Spanish and Dutch explorers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had stumbled across a few islands in the South Pacific, among them the ones the Royal Society considered as sites for the transit of Venus observations, and touched on the northern and western coasts of Australia (then known as New Holland) and the South Island of New Zealand. But even these discoveries were vaguely documented, and it remained unclear whether New Holland and New Zealand were islands or part of a continent.

Lack of knowledge, however, did not mean lack of theories about what ought to exist on the fringes of the known world. Most Europeans could not believe that the vast South Pacific might be an uninterrupted expanse of water, but thought a continent must exist somewhere in the yet-unexplored regions; the more imaginative pictured land stretching across the entire breadth of the Pacific from the South Pole well north into temperate latitudes. Mapmakers and geographers liked to call it "terra australis incognita," the unknown southern land, although some more optimistically labeled it "terra australis nondum cognita," or the southern land not yet known.

The notion that a great continent existed at the bottom of the world dated back to ancient times, when the Greeks argued that a land mass around the South Pole must exist to balance the continents in the northern hemisphere. By the twelfth century, the existence of "terra australis incognita" was widely accepted. Published accounts of Marco Polo's travels lent credence to theories about the existence of a southern continent, for he told of little-known lands southeast of Asia rich with gold and spices. And some Europeans believed that the unimaginably wealthy Land of Ophir, visited by servants of the Biblical King Solomon, must be a continent in the South Pacific. Bad translations and popular imagination blended Marco Polo's stories and accounts of the Land of Ophir into a belief that these lands were terra australis.

Other writings added conviction as well, particularly the *Travels and Voyages* of Sir John Mandeville, written in the 1350s and widely read for hundreds of years afterward. Mandeville, whose book was something of a medieval bestseller—it was translated into eleven languages and existed in at least three hundred manuscript forms before the advent of printing allowed it to be even

more widely distributed—claimed to have visited inhabited lands near the South Pole. His “travels” were entirely fanciful, but Europeans of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and even sixteenth centuries found him at least as convincing as Marco Polo, and his book consequently helped strengthen the mythology of the southern continent.

The sea voyages of the sixteenth century, far from dispelling these myths, only added the weight of observation to them. Survivors of Ferdinand Magellan’s voyage in the 1520s told of land, which they called *Tierra del Fuego*, lying south of the Strait of Magellan. Most thought the land was merely a group of islands, but mapmakers for decades afterward confidently drew the outline of a large continent just south of the Strait, culminating in the famous and influential world map by the Dutch cartographer Abraham Ortelius. Published in 1570 and frequently reprinted, Ortelius’s map showed a continent extending from the tip of South America across the Pacific to the area south of New Guinea.

The Spanish explorers Alvaro de Mendaña and Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, sailing in the 1580s and 1590s, added new force to these beliefs with their discovery of a group of islands in the southwestern Pacific. Thinking he had found the Biblical Ophir, Mendaña called his discovery King Solomon’s Islands, and both he and Quiros thought they saw the outlines of a continent in the distance. For the next two hundred years, Europeans made sporadic and unsuccessful efforts to find the Solomon Islands again. Like other Pacific discoveries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Solomons remained lost to future explorers because of inadequate methods of mapping their location.

Belief in global symmetry of another sort spurred the search for a second, equally elusive geographical phenomenon: a navigable passage across North America linking the Atlantic and Pacific. Such a “northwest passage,” widely believed to exist since Columbus’s time, would provide a northerly alternative to the routes around Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope. (Some geographers also argued for a “northeast passage” leading through the Baltic, across Asia, and into the Pacific.) A northwest passage was an especially attractive possibility for England, since it would provide a much shorter route to the Pacific and one free from Spanish or Portuguese interference.

Robert Thorne, an English merchant living in Seville in the 1520s and 1530s, was among the first to see the potential advan-

tages to England of a northern route to the Pacific; in 1527 he wrote Henry VIII suggesting that England initiate a search for a strait across the North American continent, and in 1540 he and Roger Barlow presented their *Declaration of the Indies*, a more fully developed plan that called for a voyage through the northwest passage and south across the Pacific to rich, yet-to-be-discovered tropical lands. Contemporary maps supported Thorne's conviction that a northwest passage must exist, just as they supported the theory of a southern continent. Gerhard Mercator's maps showed open seas up to the North Pole, and in the 1570s Humphrey Gilbert produced a chart showing a strait from the St. Lawrence River to the Gulf of California. That Gilbert drew his map with a view toward promoting his Company of Cathay, formed to sponsor voyages of exploration, did not diminish its influence.

No one acted on Thorne's ideas until the 1570s, however, when Martin Frobisher, sailing under the auspices of Gilbert's company, made three attempts to find a northwest passage. He got no farther than the bay in northeastern Canada now known by his name, but a 1578 map shows "Frosbisschers Straights" running all the way across Canada. Subsequent explorers sailing at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century—John Davis, Henry Hudson, William Baffin—pushed farther west through Canada's Arctic waters, but fared no better. After about 1630, further searches lapsed, but belief in the existence of a navigable northwest passage persisted.

During the sixteenth century, the Pacific became a "Spanish lake," as Spain established settlements up and down the west coast of Central and South America and in the Philippine and Ladrone islands (now called the Marianas) in the western Pacific. Spanish ships traveled regularly between Asia and Latin America, trading gold and silver from Mexico and Peru for the spices and silks of the East Indies, unloading their cargoes in Central America and carrying them overland to ships on the Caribbean side for transport to Spain. In the latter part of the century, English merchants and investors, prohibited by the Spanish government from trading with Latin America and unable to find any similar source of riches farther north, became increasingly resentful of Spain's stranglehold over this lucrative trade. Some tried to urge Queen

Elizabeth to adopt a more aggressive policy to curtail Spanish power and expand England's overseas trade, but she was unwilling to commit Crown resources to speculative voyages or risk war with Spain. Instead, she tacitly supported the exploits of pirates—or buccaneers, as they were more politely known—who preyed on Spanish shipping in the Caribbean. In wartime their activities were legally sanctioned by government commissions that in effect permitted privately owned vessels to become warships. In the 1560s and 1570s, when England and Spain were at peace, their activities continued without benefit of official authorization, justified in the minds of the buccaneers (and the government officials who looked the other way) as a means of circumscribing Spanish power.

At the same time, a few merchants and gentlemen investors began to think about ways for England to curtail Spanish power and gain a share of Pacific trade without recourse to piracy or deliberate incursions into Spanish territory. In 1574 a group organized by Richard Grenville and William Hawkins proposed a voyage that would explore the southern reaches of South America, an area not yet settled by either the Spanish or the Portuguese, and search for new lands in the Pacific south of the equator. While South America was their principal objective, recent maps showing a huge continent in the South Pacific and accounts of Mendaña's discovery of the Solomon Islands, which had leaked out despite Spanish attempts to keep it secret, raised the possibility of an alternative site for English trade, should the expedition fail to establish a foothold in South America. Grenville and Hawkins proposed a voyage through the Strait of Magellan, across the South Pacific to China, and then back to England by way of the Cape of Good Hope. But Elizabeth, fearing that the scheme would lead to hostilities with Spain, refused to give the promoters a license to sail.

English relations with Spain were deteriorating anyway, however, and three years later Elizabeth approved a similar project, although she rejected a request for financial support from the Crown. Influenced in its conception by the Hawkins/Grenville plan, this voyage was to be commanded by one of the most notorious of the buccaneers, the veteran of several years' successful raiding in the Caribbean, Francis Drake. He was to explore the southern coasts of South America, both Atlantic and Pacific, but beyond that the purposes of his voyage were vague and open to

conflicting interpretations. The gentlemen adventurers who sailed with him thought they had signed on for a voyage of exploration, which might include a search for terra australis, a northwest passage, or both, while Drake himself was most interested in plundering Spanish shipping in the Pacific. He kept these plans to himself, however, knowing that Elizabeth would not approve a predatory voyage.

Drake embarked in November 1577 with his flagship, the *Pelican*, later to be renamed the *Golden Hinde*, and four other vessels. They had an unusually easy passage through the Strait of Magellan, but as the ships emerged into the Pacific they were caught in a severe storm and blown south, past rocky islands and finally out of sight of land. Without intending it, they had discovered the southern tip of South America, proving that Magellan's Tierra del Fuego was not part of a continent but merely a group of islands. This was the most significant single discovery of Drake's voyage, although it did nothing to change Europeans' conviction of the existence of terra australis.

Heading north, Drake abandoned all pretense of exploration and sailed boldly into Spanish territory in search of booty, alienating those of his crew who thought of themselves as explorers rather than pirates. He raided Valparaiso, captured a silver-laden Spanish ship off the coast of Peru, stopped briefly to reprovision at Guatemala, and then pushed beyond the limits of Spanish settlement along the west coast of North America, in search of a northwest passage—not out of any great interest in geographical discovery, but because he knew that Spanish ships would be lying in wait to retaliate against him if he went back the way he had come. The fleet stopped for repairs along the California coast near the site of present-day San Francisco, the point farthest north on the American coast yet reached by Europeans. There Drake abandoned his search for a northwest passage, sailing instead for Manila, the Spanish-controlled port in the Philippines. He and his men threaded their way through the islands and reefs of the Indian Ocean, narrowly averting disaster when the *Golden Hinde* struck a shoal in the treacherous waters off New Guinea, and then returned to England by way of the Cape of Good Hope. They arrived home in September 1580, the first Englishmen to sail around the world. The Spanish denounced Drake's escapades as piracy; the English hailed him as a national hero.

Queen Elizabeth herself was ambivalent about Drake's esca-

pades. Following popular sentiment, she rewarded him with a knighthood; but, still attempting to preserve peace with Spain, she also returned much of the stolen treasure to the Spanish government and suppressed information about the full extent of Drake's travels, with the result that his geographical discoveries had little immediate impact. Her diplomatic efforts could not stem the continuing deterioration of English-Spanish relations, however, and in 1585 the two nations went to war.

England's defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 crippled Spanish seapower and opened opportunities for England to expand its maritime enterprise, but lack of any clear purpose or concerted support from the Crown prevented effective action. Drake's voyage had illustrated the conflict between those who favored a long-term strategy to discover new lands and sea routes that would eventually permit significant expansion of trade and those who wanted the short-term profits gained from preying on Spanish shipping. The Queen openly supported the former but tacitly sanctioned the latter as well, while refusing to put government money behind any voyage, whatever its goals. This conflict of purpose and lack of support dogged the few English efforts to extend English seapower into the Pacific in the last years of Elizabeth's reign.

When the Queen died in 1603, James I, the first of the Stuart dynasty, came to the throne and quickly moved to conclude peace with Spain. More concerned with domestic matters than with foreign affairs, he offered little encouragement for voyages devoted either to exploration or plunder, and the changing political climate, coming on the heels of the failure of recent attempts to reach the Pacific, led expansionists to focus their attention on North America. Further discoveries in the Pacific were left to the Dutch, who by the early seventeenth century had pushed the Portuguese out of their former sphere of influence in the East Indies, and to the buccaneers, who continued to roam the Caribbean and the Pacific in search of fortune.

Toward the end of the seventeenth century, a series of major political changes in Europe helped revive strategic interest in Pacific exploration. The troubled years of Stuart rule ended with the abdication of James II in 1688, and the English Crown passed to the Dutch prince, William of Orange. William quickly pulled En-

gland into the war he was fighting with France, which escalated into a general European conflict over the next decade. After a brief respite at the end of the century, dynastic changes on the continent ignited war again, as France, the most populous and powerful nation in Europe, attempted to gain control over Spain and, in the process, emerged as England's chief rival. As England maneuvered to increase its political power within Europe, issues of expansion in the New World and further exploration of unknown territories, primarily in the Pacific, took on renewed importance. A weakened Spain could no longer control access to the Pacific, and both England and France saw the value of increasing trade and territory in more distant parts of the world. The demands of war prevented any concerted policy of encouraging exploration over the next sixty years, but occasional voyages and an increasing volume of writing about exploration kept alive the belief that England must eventually establish a presence in the Pacific.

As a beginning, in 1697 the English government took an unprecedented step, authorizing a purely exploratory voyage to New Holland and New Guinea under the command of William Dampier, an ex-buccaneer who had achieved instant fame with the publication, earlier that year, of *A New Voyage Around the World*, an account of his twelve-and-a-half-year odyssey across the globe.

The son of a farmer in southwestern England, Dampier had the urge to see the world from an early age. He sailed to France and Newfoundland while apprenticed to a ship's master, and then joined the crew of a vessel bound for the Dutch East Indies. Next he went to Jamaica, and then to the Caribbean coast of Honduras, where he worked as a logwood cutter before falling in with a group of buccaneers raiding Spanish ports along the Central American coast. After a brief visit to England in 1678, Dampier returned to Honduras and signed on with the first of a series of ships that would take him around the world. As part of a buccaneer fleet of nine ships with almost five hundred men, he took part in the sack of Porto Bello, a wealthy Spanish port on the east coast of Panama. Part of the group crossed the Isthmus in search of more loot; on the Pacific side, quite unexpectedly, they captured five Spanish ships. The buccaneers seized this opportunity to cruise the coast of South America, attacking more Spanish towns along the way. At Juan Fernández Island off the coast of Patagonia, they rescued a Central American native, known only as

Will, who had been accidentally marooned on a buccaneering voyage three years earlier. (Will and Dampier both would eventually provide grist for adventure writers, notably in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.)

When the buccaneers finally returned to Panama in 1682, Dampier cruised the Caribbean for several months until joining another ship bound for Cape Horn and the Pacific. The crew picked up others along the way, until the fleet numbered ten ships and about a thousand men. Upon reaching the west coast of Central America, the captain of one of the ships announced his plans to sail across the Pacific to the East Indies; Dampier decided to go with him. In the Philippines a mutinous crew marooned the captain, who wanted to turn the voyage into a legitimate trading expedition, and took off on a pirate escapade through the East Indies.

Heading south, they anchored on the northwest coast of New Holland, earning the distinction of being the first Englishmen ever to visit that continent. Finding little sustenance on the barren coast—Dampier thought the native inhabitants were “the misera-blest People in the World”—they sailed north, stopping at a small cluster of islands south of Sumatra, where Dampier, disgusted at the cruelty and drunkenness of his companions, decided on a desperate move; with six other men, he traveled 150 miles in a small open boat to Sumatra. From there he continued his journey rather tamely as a passenger on a series of commercial ships, visiting several ports in southeast Asia and India before returning to England in 1691.

Dampier's almost unbelievable adventures and his talent for putting them into words made his the most widely read travel book since the entertaining but false adventures of Sir John Mandeville. More significantly, his perceptive and detailed observations of the lands he had visited caught the attention of English government officials and of the members of the Royal Society.

Not the typical buccaneer, Dampier had joined their ranks more out of curiosity and a sense of adventure than greed for Spanish gold. He was interested in natural phenomena of all sorts—plants and animal life, tides, currents—and kept a detailed journal throughout his voyages, even carrying it across the Isthmus of Panama sealed in a piece of bamboo for protection from wet weather. The members of the Royal Society discussed his observations and published a summary of his book in their *Philosophical*

Transactions; the Lords of the Admiralty, impressed by his knowledge, invited him to submit a proposal for a voyage.

They were influenced too by other books published about the same time, including volumes of buccaneers, some of whom had sailed with Dampier at one time or another, and the account of Abel Tasman, the Dutch explorer who had first discovered New Zealand and parts of New Holland in the 1640s. (Tasman's volume was published in an English translation for the first time in 1694.) These books portrayed the Spanish as weak and unable to control their colonies, which were constantly in danger from Indian insurrection. Dampier thought Spain could no longer manage so large an empire, and another of the buccaneers argued that England should initiate trade with South American ports by force if Spain continued to prohibit foreign commerce.

Dampier proposed a voyage to New Holland and New Guinea, areas he thought were good prospects for further discoveries. The Admiralty approved his plan, conferred upon him the rank of captain, and gave him command of the ship *Roebuck*. It was not quite what Dampier had in mind; he had requested two ships fitted out for a three-year voyage and got instead one small, leaky vessel barely fit to venture beyond the English Channel, much less into the Pacific. But he began collecting his crew and mapping out his plans nevertheless.

Dampier planned to sail through the Strait of Magellan and across the South Pacific to Australia and New Guinea, which he, like most people at the time, thought were part of the same land mass. Having explored this region, particularly the as yet unseen east coast of New Holland, he would proceed through the islands of the East Indies and back to England around the Cape of Good Hope. Neither Dampier, nor the Lords of the Admiralty, nor anyone else concerned with the voyage recognized the similarities between his plan and Drake's, for Drake and his contemporaries' voyages had been all but forgotten as a new generation set out to discover the world beyond the Americas.

Dampier was an expert navigator but had no experience of command, a deficiency that created trouble almost as soon as he left England. He battled constantly with his lieutenant, George Fisher, and before they were across the Atlantic Dampier confined Fisher in irons, a move that resulted in a near-mutiny among his crew. When the expedition reached the coast of Brazil, Dampier had Fisher thrown into jail without any provision for his

subsequent release or transport back to England, a breach of naval procedure that reflected his lack of experience and would come back to haunt him later.

From Brazil, Dampier followed the usual route through the Strait of Magellan and across the South Pacific to the East Indies. Many others had traveled this route before him, and he made no new discoveries of significance until he was almost to New Guinea, where he sighted an island much larger than any yet charted in the Pacific. Dampier named his discovery New Britain; in fact what he had found, although he did not realize it, was two islands divided by a narrow channel, known today as New Britain and New Ireland.

From this point Dampier intended to sail south in search of the east coast of New Holland, but the condition of his leaky ship, now desperately in need of repair, convinced him to head for the Dutch port of Batavia in the East Indies, where the *Roebuck* could be temporarily patched up. Despite the repairs, the *Roebuck* sank just off Ascension Island in the mid-Atlantic. Dampier and his crew subsisted five weeks on rice and turtles before being rescued by an English ship headed for the West Indies, and they did not get back to England until early in 1702, almost five years after their departure. There Dampier discovered that George Fisher had made his way home from Brazil more than a year earlier, giving him ample time to spread his version of the dispute with Dampier among influential Navy officials. Dampier, court-martialed for the loss of his ship and his treatment of Fisher, received as thanks for his efforts the loss of all compensation for his voyage.

But although his voyage did not live up to either Dampier's or the Admiralty's expectations, it was not a total loss. New Britain was an island large and fertile enough to be valuable to England; even if the island itself did not yield tangible riches, it might make an excellent base for trade with other parts of the Pacific and Indian Oceans. More significant in the long run, Dampier collected quantities of plants from the tropical islands he had visited, which he turned over to the Royal Society, inaugurating a tradition of scientific observation and collection among Pacific explorers. Drawings of some of these finds illustrated the book he published on the voyage in 1703. And his observations on winds, storms, and currents shed light on the systematic relations among these conditions for the first time, helping to make future navigation in the Pacific more predictable.

War broke out between England and Spain in 1702, putting an end to any further government-sponsored expeditions for the time being. Dampier, however, simply shifted back into his buccaneer's role; in 1703 he set out again for the South Pacific, this time commissioned by Queen Anne as a privateer to prey on Spanish shipping. This voyage was scarcely more successful than the last. Several mutinous seamen deserted to captured Spanish ships, and the quarrelsome captain of a ship accompanying Dampier, the *Cinque Ports*, decided to go his own way. By the time the *Cinque Ports* anchored at Juan Fernández Island some weeks later, a seaman named Alexander Selkirk was so disgusted with this captain that he decided to jump ship and take his chances alone on the island with nothing more than some clothes and bedding, a gun, powder, bullets, tobacco, hatchet, knife, kettle, a Bible and a few other books, and some mathematical instruments.

Back in England, in 1708 Dampier joined another privateering voyage, this one sponsored by a group of Bristol merchants. He was not captain this time, but served as pilot under Woodes Rogers, an experienced commander. It was a happy combination, for Rogers had the talent for command that Dampier lacked, and Dampier was at his best when he could concentrate on technical and scientific matters without the necessity of managing men.

Dampier had learned about the incident of Alexander Selkirk, and after rounding Cape Horn, he and Rogers sailed directly for Juan Fernández to take on provisions and try to discover the man's fate. Although it had been four years since Selkirk chose his solitary exile, they found him in good health and spirits, living in a hut of pimiento trees lined with goat skins and subsisting on a diet of goats and crayfish the size of lobsters.

The Englishmen took Selkirk aboard and continued up the South American coast on what turned out to be one of the most successful privateering voyages of the war. They returned to England in 1711 rich men, and Rogers added to his fame and fortune by quickly publishing an account of the voyage. The parallel stories of Selkirk and Will, both marooned on the same island and both rescued by groups including Dampier, as Rogers pointed out, ensured the book's popularity with a curiosity-craving public.

Peace returned to Europe two years later, discouraging further Pacific expeditions; privateering voyages like Dampier's once again became illegal, and Spain, its American empire still intact, renewed its policy forbidding nearly all foreign trade with its Amer-

ican settlements. In 1720 the South Sea Company, a joint-stock venture organized ostensibly to open new trade routes in the Pacific, collapsed amid financial scandal, which further dampened enthusiasm for Pacific ventures. For the time being, English interest in expansion of trade and empire remained focused on North America, where thriving colonies offered certain markets and the possibility of French incursion into territory claimed by England posed a more immediate threat than Spanish hegemony in Latin America.

The waning of official interest in the Pacific did not diminish popular fascination with the region, however, nor did it dampen the enthusiasm of travel writers, mapmakers, and theorists on world geography. In the half-century between Dampier and Cook, they kept alive English curiosity about the Pacific.

Books about travel, especially to the Pacific, proliferated in the first half of the eighteenth century and enjoyed a steadily increasing audience. Dampier himself had started the trend; his first book went through three editions in nine months, encouraging him to publish a second volume two years later. The books continued to do well, and his publisher became a specialist in travel literature. Over the next decade, eight new collections of travel accounts were published in London, and others were reprinted. Between 1660 and 1800, more than one hundred collections of voyages appeared in print, many of them in multiple editions and some translated into several languages. By the 1720s, travel books were second only to theology, the staple of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century publishing, in number of titles published annually.

Writing accounts of their adventures became an accepted and often lucrative task for returning travelers, and printers vied with each other to publish the latest works. The booksellers Awnsham and John Churchill, seeing an opportunity for profit, in 1704 put together a four-volume, sixteen-hundred-page collection of voyages translated from seven languages, including several never previously published. John Harris, a minister who also wrote on scientific subjects and later became secretary of the Royal Society, published a similarly weighty collection in 1705, titled *Navigantium atque Itinerarium Bibliotheca*. Sponsored by a syndicate of booksellers, Harris's work was intended to compete with the Churchills' for a share of the market in travel literature.

Both the scope and the lavish style of publication priced these

volumes beyond the average reader's budget, but after 1700 the introduction of cheap editions of books, circulating libraries, and book clubs made books increasingly accessible to people with small incomes. Where a clergyman or schoolmaster of the late sixteenth century had to spend the equivalent of one to three weeks' income to buy Hakluyt's *Voyages*, one of the earliest collections of travel accounts, or as much as a day's pay for an inexpensive edition of one of Shakespeare's plays, by the eighteenth century the availability of serial editions had reduced the cost of books substantially. Under this arrangement, begun in the seventeenth century and greatly expanded after 1730, publishers issued books a few sheets per week, stitched in blue paper covers and priced at a few pennies an issue. The "number books" or "subscription books," as they were often called, included works on travel—a collection of travel accounts called *A View of the Universe*, published in 1708, was the first of its type to be issued serially—history, biography, religion, and even an edition of Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary*.

Readers could also keep up with the latest travel accounts by reading popular magazines, like the *Gentleman's Magazine* or the *London Magazine*, both established in the 1730s, which frequently published excerpts from books on travel. And those who could not afford to buy books at all, and did not wish to pay the fee to join a subscription library, could always repair to one of the coffeehouses, which kept the latest popular books, newspapers, and magazines for their patrons to read. One London coffeehouse advertised that a copy of Woodes Rogers's book was available to be "seen and read Gratis" as an inducement to potential customers.

So popular were books about travel, especially travel to exotic places, that accounts of real adventures could hardly fill the demand, and enterprising writers added to the literature by making up tales of exploration. Some of these books were obvious hoaxes, but others were more subtle fabrications, intended to be accepted as truth. At a time when plagiarism was routine and copyright laws nonexistent, writers commonly copied and elaborated the accounts of others until it became nearly impossible to distinguish truth from fiction, even in books ostensibly based on fact.

Daniel Defoe was the quintessential master of this genre. His most famous work, *Robinson Crusoe*, loosely based on the adventures of Alexander Selkirk and Will, was published as a deliberately imaginary account, although he followed the conventions commonly used by real-life voyagers in writing about their travels.