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**Embodying the Borderlands of El Dorado:
English Concepts of Native Americans in the Guianas,
1500-1800**

Abstract: The English drive to competitively negotiate imperial ambitions in South America is embodied by the “Guiana native” as a nexus of Early Modern English publications. Once colonial rule had been established, however, this trope became superfluous, a gradual marginalization which this paper traces into the 18th century. In an imagological analysis, the “Guiana native” emerges as a figure that balances native subservience with innate sovereignty, gendered Otherness and emerging racial constructions. Older tropes such as Cannibalism are re-defined as de/perception (Raleigh, Kemys, Harcourt). In royalist Civil War publications the trope is tempered to that of the “noble savage,” to be sexualized (Warren) and staged (Behn) in the Restoration. Conversely, Puritans maintain a conservative approach towards this figure well into the Restoration, and read the native body as part of the mystical body of the English faithful (Harcourt, Day) or even as a stand-in for the English (Gage). The paradoxes of Defoe’s *Friday* emerge as resulting from his eclectic blend of dated versions of this trope. In the late 18th century only rudiments of the original trope remain in Stedman.