Armstrong Undergraduate Journal of History

Volume 6 | Issue 1 Article 2

4-2016

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The "Golden Age of Piracy" lasted from the middle of the seventeenth century until the middle of the eighteenth century. During this period, massive number of pirates swarmed the Atlantic and the Indian oceans, obscene amount of wealth traveled through the hands of pirates, and piracy was enacted throughout the globe on an incredible scale.[1] The Golden Age was such a successful period of pirating that those who roamed the seas were seen as "enemies to all nations."[2] While most people today may naturally assume that men were the only active participants in piracy, women also played an impressive role in the period and historians like Jo Stanley estimate that one percent of pirates during the Golden Age of Piracy were women.[3]

Anne Bonny and Mary Read are two of the most famous female pirates during this Golden Age of Piracy. The two women along with other female pirates in history proved that women could sail under the same circumstances as men, just through different means. Although the two pirate women shared little in common, they ended up on the same ship, and it has since

[1] Arne Bialuschewski, "Between Newfoundland and the Malacca Strait: A Survey of the Golden Age of Piracy, 1695-1725," *The Mariner's Mirror* 2 (May 2004), 167-186.
[2] Colin Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates: Being the True and Surprising Story of the Caribbean Pirates and the Man Who Brought Them Down* (Orlando: Harcourt Inc., 2007), 330.
[3] Jo Stanley, ed, *Bold in Her Breeches: Women Pirates across the Ages* (London: Pandora, 1995), 39-40.

been extremely rare for historians to discuss one without the other. Traditionally, Anne Bonny and Mary Read have been viewed as two nearly identical women pirates. Their stories are discussed together and told in a similar manner in an effort to explain the similar outcomes of two women by manipulating the context of their lives.[4] In reality, their differences far outweighed their similarities and their lives should be analyzed as two separate women who represent two entirely different groups of women sailors, those who disguised themselves as men to hide their female identity, and those who did not. While both women and their represented groups joined piracy and stayed at sea for various reasons, an exploration into their adventures will contribute to a better understanding of the voices and situations of women who were in, most cases, in shadow during the early modern times.

Anne Bonny was born near the town of Cork in Ireland as the illegitimate daughter of lawyer William Cormac and his maid.[5] When Anne Bonny was born, Cormac dressed her as a boy and passed her off to the community as the son of a relative he took in to raise in his legal profession. His efforts to hide her sex to keep his indiscretion a secret from his wife, however, were useless. When Bonny was old enough to speak, she spilled the secret to a visitor, and

[4] John C Appleby, *Women and English Piracy, 1540-1720: Partners and Victims of Crime* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), 23-49; David Cordingly, *Seafaring Women: Adventures of Pirate Queens, Female Stowaways, and Sailors' Wives* (United States: Random House, Inc., 2001), 79-87; David Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and the Realty of Life among the Pirates* (New York: Random House, 1995), 316-318; Linda Grant De Pauw, *Seafaring Women* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982), 39; Captain Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Robberies & Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates* (New York: Lyons Press, 1998), 117-131 ; Ulrike Klausmann and Marion Meinzerin, *Women Pirates and the Politics of the Jolly Roger* (New York: Black Rose Books LTD, 1997), 145-151 ; Sally O'Driscoll, "The Pirate's Breasts: Criminal Women and the Meaning of the Body," *Eighteenth Century: Theory & Interpretation* (University Of Pennsylvania Press) 53, n.3 (2012): 357-379, http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.gatekeeper2.lindenwood.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=2&sid=cd39d736-c110-49ba-88a1-f50db87606ec%40sessionmgr4002&hid=4113&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=78200735&db=hlh (accessed September 20, 2015); Marcus Redicker, "Libertalia: The Pirate's Utopia," in *Pirates: Terror on the High Seas, from the Caribbean to the South China Sea*, ed., David Cordingly (Atlanta: Turner Pub, 1998), 124-139; Marcus Rediker, *Villains Of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 103-126; Stanley, ed., *Bold in Her Breeches,* 36-41; Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates,* 316-320.

[5] De Pauw, *Seafaring Women*, 33.

Cormac's reputation and career were soon destroyed. He could no longer make a living in his town and made the decision to move to the New World with Anne Bonny and her birth mother. They arrived in South Carolina, where Bonny was dressed as their daughter.[6] Anne Bonny grew up as a strong and outspoken women in her father's home. Captain Charles Johnson describes her as "fierce and courageous" in temper and reports that she had once so violently beat a man who had tried to rape her, "that he lay ill of it a considerable time."[7] Bonny soon tested her father's temper, and found herself kicked out of his home in South Carolina after marrying without his consent. At the age of 16 she married John Bonny, a "feckless sailor" who brought her to the island of Nassau, a pirate haven in the Caribbean.[8] Bonny quickly gained a "reputation for libertine behavior," and became an "infamous harlot" of the island.[9]

Around May of 1719, "Calico Jack" Rackham, the captain of a pirate ship, came to Nassau for pardon, where he met the woman who had "cuckolded her husband on a great many occasions," Anne Bonny.[10] The two quickly took to each other's company and fell in love. Sometime before the summer of 1720, they agreed to confront John Bonny to ask for a "wife sale." In this instance, Rackham offered to provide John Bonny with a lump sum of money in exchange for "divorcing" Anne so that Rackham could marry her.[11] This plan went terribly wrong when Governor Woodes Rodgers was informed of this proposal. It is uncertain whether John Bonny or Richard Turnley, a man who was asked to witness the "wife sale," informed Rodgers. It is entirely possible, and likely, that the two both confronted Rodgers.[12] Either way, Rodgers was informed and made both Rackham and Anne Bonny fully aware that if the two did

[6] Captain Johnson, *A General History*, 34, 117-131
[7] Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates*, 130.
[8] Cordingly, *Seafaring Women*, 65, and Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, 139.
[9] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, 316.
[10] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, 316.
[11] De Pauw, *Seafaring Women*, 35.
[12] Appleby, *Women and English Piracy*, 213, and De Pauw, *Seafaring Women*, 35.

not break ties, and Anne Bonny return to her husband, then Rodgers would have her thrown into prison and force Rackham to whip her. The two devised a third option and turned to piracy.[13] On the ship, Anne would be free of her husband and able to live a life of adventure with Rackham. Anne Bonny's motive to become a pirate was out of the desire to continue her relationship with Rackham and avoid jail, while also ridding herself of her husband, killing two birds with one stone.

Anne Bonny represents the group of women sailors who went to sea without disguising their gender. Bonny's story is one-of-a-kind when it comes to the romantic notions that drew her to the sea, however, it does not make her story particularly unique. Although there was a contempt for women who were highly stigmatized and mostly considered "bad luck" for being onboard, but it was never made illegal during this time period for women to become sailors.[14] The notion that women were "bad luck" when brought aboard made it difficult for a woman to sail without hiding her gender, at the same time there were dozens of ballads and stories that contradicted sailor superstition and celebrated women pirates and women sailors before and during the time of Anne Bonny and Mary Read. For example, Princess Avilda of Sweden in the twelfth century turned to piracy in a fit of rebellion against arranged marriage, and assembled a crew made entirely of women sailors.[15] Lady Killgrew of Cornwall, along with her husband, Sir John Killgrew, were referred to as "members of the 'oligarchy of sea-robber capitalists,"[16] who attacked a German ship for its prizes. Lady Killfrew escaped the death sentence, however, due to her old age.[17] Grace O'Malley is a particularly interesting female pirate. She is such a well-

[13] Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, 316-318.
[14] Appleby, *Women and English Piracy, 1540-1720,* 192.
[15] De Pauw, *Seafaring Women*, 20-21.
[16] Klausmann and Meinzerin, *Women Pirates*, 146.
[17] De Pauw, *Seafaring Women*, 22-23; Klausmann, *Women Pirates,* 145-151.

known figure in Ireland that Anne Bonny was certain to have heard stories of her when growing up. She was born to mercantile parents with a history of piratical practices and she used these skills from her father to set out on a private war against Britain.[18] Throughout her career, O'Malley was arrested, but always escaped conviction. Her last arrest effectively ended her career of piracy: Elizabeth I pulled her out of prison to negotiate a privateering charter, deciding it was better to work with her than against her.[19] Another female pirate who went to sea without disguising her gender was Maria Cobham. Maria was a prostitute from Plymouth who ended up becoming the wife of a pirate, Captain Cobham, and who sailed at about the same time period as Anne Bonny and Mary Read.[20] It took some time, but eventually Maria won over the crew with her bloodshed, bravery, and fierceness. Once, when the crew had taken a ship whose captain refused to surrender, Maria marched aboard the ship, stabbed the captain in the heart, and signaled for the pirates to kill the rest of his crew.[21] Once retired, the couple lived normal lives until one day Maria Cobham committed suicide by taking a tincture of opium.[22] Why Maria Cobham committed suicide is unknown, but her life, as well as those of the women mentioned before her, magnify the characteristics of women sailors and they exemplify how a woman could travel at sea without disguise.

As made evident by the previously mentioned women, the safest way for a woman to enter into piracy, without disguise, was to have the favor of the captain, or to be the captain themselves. Anne Bonny and Maria Cobham were the wives and companions of their captains. The whole reason that they had gone into piracy was because their men knew the occupation and

[18] De Pauw, *Seafaring Women*, 25-26.
[19] Klausmann, *Women Pirates,* 158-160.
[20] Stanley, ed, *Bold in Her Breeches*, 190-191.
[21] Stanley, ed., *Bold in Her Breeches*, 191.
[22] "Laudanum," Merriam-Webster.com, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/laudanum (accessed November 1, 2015) and Jo Stanley, ed, *Bold in Her Breeches*, 192.

asked them to sail.[23] Although there are no records of how Rackham's crew felt about Bonny's presence, it is obvious how the crew of Captain Cobham felt about Maria. It took Maria time to win over the men because they were all convinced that she was a piece of property to be shared, not another member of the crew. Eventually Maria obtained the position of Officer of the Ship, where she effectively ran it as the captain, since Cobham was slowly losing enthusiasm to sail.[24] Like Cobham, Avilda, Grace O'Malley, and Lady Killgrew held captain-like statuses. Lady Killgrew, although not a captain, commanded the two men she raided with and was clearly the individual in control of the groups actions. O'Malley and Avilda genuinely captained their crews. Avilda recruited her sailors and declared herself captain as they pirated at sea, while O'Malley inherited a fleet of ships from her father, clearly defining Grace O'Malley as the captain and owner of her ships.[25] There is a trend among these women to be fierce and in power, which effectively portrays the type of woman that could not only survive, but thrive as a pirate.

Contrasting Anne Bonny and the group of women sailors like her is Mary Read, who represents the group of women who traveled at sea under the disguise of men. Mary Read was born as an illegitimate child in England. Her mother was married to a sailor with whom she had a son. Captain Johnson describes that the husband disappeared from the mother's life, having either died at sea or simply never returned from a voyage. After the husband's disappearance, the mother became pregnant with another man's child.[26] In order to hide this shame from her in-laws, she and her son moved to the countryside so that she might have the child in the home of a friend. Either shortly after or before Mary Read's birth, her older brother died. Read and her mother lived in the countryside until they ran out of money. Left penniless and desperate, her

[23] Stanley, ed., *Bold in Her Breeches*, 190-191, and Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, 316-318.
[24] Stanley, ed., *Bold in Her Breeches*, 190-192.
[25] De Pauw, *Seafaring Women*, 20-27.
[26] Captain Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates,* 117.

mother decided to dress Read up like her late brother in an attempt to convince her mother-in-law that Read was her grandson. After accomplishing this deceit, Read's mother begged her mother-in-law for the money to support her grandchild. Mary Read's mother succeeded, and Read's disguise as male was determined.[27]

When Read was about the age of 13, the grandmother passed away, and the income that kept Read and her mother alive was gone. The mother quickly found Read a job as a foot-boy for a French woman in town. When Read outgrew her position, she joined the army as a soldier and was stationed in Flanders. Successful in war, she then joined a cavalry regiment, where she fell in love with one of her fellow soldiers. While sharing a tent with this soldier, Read decided to reveal her sex to him, and, while he urged her to sleep with him, she refused to do so until they were married. During the next lull in the war, the two left camp, bought Mary Read women's clothes, and married. A number of the soldiers of their regiment attended the wedding and bought Read housekeeping gifts. The two filed for discharge from the forces and began working at an inn together.[28]

Their happily-ever-after ending did not last long. Her husband died shortly after they married, and Read went back to living the way she had been raised in. She fashioned men's clothing and joined another army for a relatively small amount of time. Read was no longer interested in living the life of a soldier, or European life for that matter. She jumped a ship headed for the New World in order to leave her old life behind her. On the journey across the Atlantic, the ship was captured by pirates. With no career awaiting her at the end of the ship's travels, she took advantage of the situation. Dressed as a man, Read decided to join their ship and explore her economic opportunities as a pirate. It is unknown how long she sailed before arriving

[27] Captain Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates,* 117-118.
[28] Captain Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates,* 118-120.

in New Providence to seek out the same pardon that Captain Calico Jack Rackham had sought. When she arrived, she joined a group of privateers hired by Governor Rodgers, but when they sailed out, the crew mutinied against the captain, and Read found herself on yet another pirate ship. Soon she would find herself aboard Rackham's ship.[29]

As strange and unlikely as Mary Read's crossdressing sounds, it was not all that uncommon. In London, there were thirteen documented cases of women dressing like men prior to 1603. Authors and historians Judith M. Bennett and Shannon McSheffrey believe that it is possible that there were more women crossdressing as men that went uncaught due to the charges the caught women faced. Those who were caught were charged with misbehavior of sexual or moral acts, usually both. Bennett and McSheffrey explain that more women could have gone unnoticed for their crossdressing because they were not involved in offensive acts. [30] Historians Rudolf Dekker and Lotte van de Pol provide evidence that most women who cross-dressed did so for work or travel, because to do either as a man, was safer than to do so as a woman.[31] Cross-dressing was also an appealing escape into a new identity for foreign women in London. Disguised as men, women could earn a better wage and therefore earn a better living. New city, new life, new job, new gender.[32]

The Elizabethan era was not the only time in which women cross-dressed. Women dressed as men and enlisted into armies and navies, especially after 1650. European armies always had wives and families that followed their soldiers. They provided rations, tended to wounds, and took care of wifely duties, such as laundry. Around 1650, armies and navies were

[29] Captain Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates,* 120-121.
[30] Judith M. Bennett and Shannon McSheffrey, "Early, Erotic and Alien: Women Dressed as Men in Late Medieval London," *History Workshop Journal* 77 (February 2014): 1-3.
[31] Bennett and McSheffrey, "Early, Erotic and Alien," 7.
[32] Bennett and McSheffrey, "Early, Erotic and Alien," 15-16.

beginning to drastically reduce the number of wives that were allowed to follow troops. In England, there could be no more than eight wives to every hundred or so soldiers.[33] It is argued that this reduction of women might have influenced "the rise of documented cases of women soldiers," although historian Barton C. Hacker suggests plainly that "some women clearly had a taste for battle."[34] Hacker also notes that the rise in cross-dressing women soldiers "coincided with the decline of the pike and the replacement of the matchlock musket by the lighter flintlock," implying that the need for masculine strength was unnecessary to assimilate into military life post 1650.[35]

Mary Read represents the smaller, less known group of women who went to sea dressed as men. This is only the lesser known group because there is such a small number of known women cross-dressers who went to sea. However, historians like Jo Stanley estimate that anywhere from 1,000-5,000 pirates sailing the seas during this era, there must have been anywhere between fifty to a hundred women sailors.[36] Although Mary Read is the only known cross-dressed woman pirate, there are still documented cases of cross-dressed women sailors. Mary Talbot and Hannah Snell fit into this category. Mary Talbot was an English girl born in London in 1778, who followed Captain Essex Bowen as his foot-boy to the West Indies, where she joined the British Navy and was involved in a number of battles.[37] There is debate among historians as to how true Talbot's story is considering that there are a few discrepancies between her accounts and the accounts of the British Government, but it is certain that she successfully dressed as a man in the British Navy without being caught. Another woman sailor Hannah Snell

[33] Barton C. Hacker, "Women and Military Institutions in Early Modern Europe: A Reconnaissance," *Signs* 6 (Summer 1981): 658-659.
[34] Hacker, "Women and Military Institutions," 659.
[35] Hacker, "Women and Military Institutions," 658-659.
[36] Stanley, ed, *Bold in Her Breeches: Women Pirates across the Ages*, 39-40.
[37] Cordingly, *Seafaring Women*, 76.

(b. 1723) also hailed from England. After a failed marriage with a Dutch sailor named James Summs, Snell made the decision to join the Army dressed as a man and take the name of her brother-in-law. She later journeyed to India.[38] It is said that she was shot six times, including once in the groin. To keep her sex a secret, she convinced a nurse to bring her more bandages and dug the slug out of her groin herself.[39] Although neither became pirates, they provide thoughtful insight on what drove women to disguise their genders and take to the sea.

Mary Read, Mary Talbot, and Hannah Snell represent the group of women who traveled at sea in disguise. They provide evidence of the ways women could survive a life of sailing, usually without being caught. They support Rudolf Dekker and Lotte van de Pol's theory that most women who cross-dressed did so for work and/or travel.[40] These women fashioned themselves in men's clothing and took on the work of men in order to escape their pasts and make their futures for themselves. The fact that Mary Talbot, Mary Read, and Hannah Snell were never caught as women during their military careers shines a light on the ease it took for them to assimilate into military life.

The stories of Anne Bonny and Mary Read converged in an interesting way. In the summer of 1720, the two female pirates met one another aboard Rackham's ship. Captain Johnson theorizes that Bonny tried to seduce Read, believing that Read was an attractive male, and Read was then forced to share her secret in order to keep from an awkward sexual encounter. Afterwards, the two became fast friends. Bonny was the only one aboard who knew of Read's secret until Rackham became dangerously jealous of the time Bonny was spending with Read. At

[38] Cordingly, *Seafaring Women*, 70-71.
[39] Cordingly, *Seafaring Women*, 70-74.
[40] Bennett and McSheffrey, "Early, Erotic and Alien," 7.

one point Rackham threatened to kill Read for trying to take his woman. Only then did Bonny tell him of Read's true sex.[41]

On August 22, 1720, the two women and the rest of their crew stole the *William,* one of the fastest ships in the Caribbean Islands. They took the ship and sailed it around New Providence Island, plundering as they traveled. Rackham and Bonny took the ship to track down Richard Turnley, the man they believed informed Governor Rodgers of their marriage plans. Although they did not find him, they left a message with a few members of his crew stating that if they were ever to see Turnley again, "they would whip him to death."[42]

After a few months of reckless pirating, Anne Bonny and Mary Read were captured on Rackham's ship and tried together. The men on the ship were tried together and hung on November 18, 1720. It is reported that Anne Bonny was allowed into Rackham's cell to see him one last time, where she told him "I'm sorry to see you here, but if you had fought like a man, you need not hanged like a dog."[43] It was determined that the two women were guilty of piracy in their trial, however, they escaped execution by claiming they were pregnant.[44] Mary Read died of a fever while in prison, and the likes of Anne Bonny are unknown. It is possible that her father could have bailed her out of jail, or that she had escaped prison.[45]

All of these women discussed, the disguised and the non-disguised, push the contemporary understanding of the pirate ship and where women could find their place on one. As Mary Read demonstrates, life for a cross-dressed woman who no longer wished to work in the Army could make life on a pirate ship a possible occupation. Maria Cobham and Anne

[41] Captain Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates,* 122.
[42] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates,* 317-318.
[43] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, 317 and Captain Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates,* 131.
[44] Joel H. Baer, ed. *British Piracy in the Golden Age: History and Interpretation, 1660-1730.* Vol. 3 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007), 28-29.
[45] Klausmann, *Women Pirates*, 209-210.

Bonny demonstrate that women could find enjoyment in the life of a pirate with the support of their captains, while women like Grace O'Malley and Lady Killgrew demonstrate that women could like the life, live the life, and make a profit large enough to warrant the attention of a queen.

Although the motives that caused women to join the life of seafaring individuals have been examined, the reasons they stayed have not. As seen with Hannah Snell, seafaring and war was an escape from the life she had as an abandoned wife and childless mother; while Mary Read and Mary Talbot fell into seafaring because they were raised as the opposite gender. Maria Cobham and Anne Bonny both used the sway of their captains/lovers to keep them aboard, while quickly developing a love affair of piracy; while Grace O'Malley and Lady Killgrew were not fresh to piracy and continued to do so into their old age. Princess Avilda is exceptional because she pirated to change her father's mind and quit her pirating career. All of these women either hid their identity or sailed as themselves, but what kept them sailing?

It is obvious through the stories of Talbot and Snell that they were taking opportunities left and right to get out of military life. Princess Avilda retired and married a prince, while Maria Cobham stopped sailing after acquiring enough money to build her dream home in France. These four women continued sailing as a means to an end, and therefore stopped sailing at a time determined under their circumstances. The remaining women did not try, or want, to refrain from sailing or pirating. Grace O'Malley appeared to be continuing some sort of family legacy and operating under a vendetta against England; Lady Killgrew married into the piratical equivalent of a mafia family; Anne Bonny sailed with Rackham as an alternative to a less desirable imprisonment; while Mary Read fell into piracy due to her economic status. These four women remained pirates until something or someone pulled them out of it. Bonny, Killgrew, and Read

left piracy due to their arrests, while O'Malley only technically left pirating due to Elizabeth I's strategic offer to hire her as a privateer.

Another reason these women continued their lives as pirates can be explained through a popular social theory on the phenomenon of piracy. The basis of the theory can be identified in the fictitious story of "Libertalia," as told by Captain Charles Johnson. Libertalia is the story of how a pirate, Captain Mission, and his crew founded an egalitarian society on Madagascar. The crew saw themselves as anti-captialists who were striving to bring to life Cromwellian values. The motley crew renounced their citizenships to their countries of origin and aligned themselves with Libertalia, claiming their nationality as "Liberti."[46] These men sought to redefine property and power, and denounced all monarchy, claiming it "existed to defend inequality."[47] However much this community despised hierarchy, they were by no means a communist society. Money was of no use to them and property was not communal: "such lands as any particular man would enclose should for the future be deemed his property, which no other should have any claim to if not alienated by a sale."[48]

Although Libertalia was not an actual settlement, historians like Christopher Hill suggest that Captain Johnson must have interviewed pirates who had heard from others of the pirate haven that actually existed on Madagascar, adding embellishments to the stories, almost like a large scale version on the children's game "Telephone."[49] Hill also suggests that this story was created by the inspiration of the failed Civil War in England. Just before and after the defeat of the working class in 1660, the West Indies became a refuge for radical English thinkers.[50]

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[46] Redicker, "Libertalia: The Pirate's Utopia," 124-126.
[47] Christopher Hill, *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill: People and Ideas in 17th Century England,* Vol. 3, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), 163.
[48] Christopher Hill, *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill,* 164.
[49] Christopher Hill, *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill,* 165.
[50] Redicker, "Libertalia: The Pirate's Utopia," 128.

Quakers fled to Bermuda, Jewish populations moved into Jamaica and Barbados, and Puritans created massive settlements in New England and on some small northern Caribbean islands.[51] These men quickly became the "source of recruits for the privateers and buccaneers" that were hired by the islands to keep the population safe in the absence of the British Navy.[52] After these privateers were no longer needed, the men became pirates, spreading their ideologies among pirate ships. Marcus Redicker adds to this theory through stressing that the ideas of equality expressed by these radical thinkers flourished incredibly on pirate ships. These theories suggest that the motives to become a pirate and remain a pirate are directly linked to the levels of equality that pirates had aboard their ships.[53]

These theories can be adapted to Anne Bonny and Mary Read's motives to remain aboard the ship as well. Anne Bonny joined because she wanted to be with Rackham, but they could have just traveled to a new island and lived the remainder of their lives out of the reach of Governor Rodgers. Mary Read joined piracy to make money, but she could have gained her fortune, quit piracy, and disappeared into the life of a merchant, or even into the life of a woman. Hill and Redicker's theories point to the equality that these women would gain upon a pirate ship that could not be found on coastal or inland society. The women had more freedom as pirates than they did with any other career, despite the gender they portrayed, which is why they stayed as pirates.

It may seem unlikely that Bonny and Read were women accepted aboard the pirate ship; after all, just a few decades previous to their piracy, Salem was hanging women for witchcraft. However, evidence in the women's trials can help prove that women can be accepted as a part of

[51] Christopher Hill, *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill,* 167-168.
[52] Christopher Hill, *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill,* 173.
[53] Redicker, "Libertalia: The Pirate's Utopia," 124-139.

this theory. The trial recorded five witnesses who laid claims against the women. Thomas Dillion testified that he saw the women waving guns and cursing a great deal on board Rackham's ship. Thomas Spenlow identified the two women as the ones he had seen on Rackham's ship when he was captured.[54] Two Frenchmen, John Besneck and Peter Cornelian, testified that they saw the women "very active on board and willing to do any thing," and that they saw them dressed in men's clothes during chase, and in women's clothes during sail. Besneck and Cornelian also noted that the women did not appear to be detained on the ship, but there "of their own Free-Will and Consent."[55] Dorothy Thomas testified that the women dressed like men, "and that each of them had a Machet(that is how it is spelled in the primary source) and Pistol in their Hands," as they argued with their crew over killing the deponent, of which they were avid in doing in order to keep her from testifying against them.[56] These five witnesses described Bonny and Read's behavior as "like men," using weapons, participating and initiating violence, and thrashing about the ship during chase.[57] These cross-dressing women were not only allowed to use weapons, but knew how to use them, and they were avid in chase and violence. These women were elevated to an equal social status on the ship.

Anne Bonny and Mary Read represent two entirely different groups of women sailors, and should be examined as different women with different motives and different stories. Bonny and Read's ability to assimilate into their pirate crews also pushes the known theories on the social construct of piracy. Anne Bonny represents women who traveled to sea without disguising their gender. She represents the definitive relationship a woman had to have with the captain in order to remain on the pirate ship, and had to overcome the "bad luck" omen that women

[54] Baer, ed. *British Piracy in the Golden Age*, 27-28.
[55] Baer, ed. *British Piracy in the Golden Age,* 28.
[56] Baer, ed. *British Piracy in the Golden Age,* 28.
[57] Baer, ed. *British Piracy in the Golden Age,* 27-29.

represented on board. [58] Bonny's importance to the Golden Age of Piracy has helped bring women like Princess Avilda, Lady Killgrew, Grace O'Malley, and Maria Cobham into the light to be re-examined. Mary Read represents the group of women sailors who chose to disguise themselves while sailing. Although this group is smaller and Read represents the only known cross-dressed woman pirate, she still opens the door to re-examine the known women cross-dressers who sailed and served in military positions. Mary Read brings context to the stories of Mary Talbot and Hannah Snell, as well as helps historians understand the motives that might have caused women to dress and sail as men. Although these women have no strict similarities, together they help understand two ways women sailed at sea, and the many motives that led to and kept women sailing.

About the author

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[58] Appleby, *Women and English Piracy, 1540-1720,* 192.