Who Needs Pirate Heroes?

C.R. Pennell


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Before I began reading the books for this article, one of my children came home from her primary school with a library book about pirates. In it was a story about a Danish captain in the West Indies during the eighteenth century who raided ships, under the pretense that he was a privateer equipped with letters of marque issued by the Danish King. The document was impressive to look at and no one could read Danish anyway. It eventually turned out that it was no more than a licence to hunt wild pigs, and that the captain was not a privateer but a pirate.

I had not heard this story before and, hoping to find the source, I contacted a friend by e-mail who is an expert on privateers. He replied:

No, I haven't heard of the Danish letter of marque story. It is a pity that children's books focus on the irregularities of the privateering story — it's misleading. Children should, instead, be offered a detailed statistical analysis of privateers by port, by tonnage range, by number of guns carried, by prizes taken — I know someone who could supply Puffin with the text.

My daughter did not think much of this idea. But the point is a good one: the behaviour of pirates is so dramatic in its content, apparently romantic in its action, so photogenic in its possibilities that the temptation to focus on that, and to ignore the "one-two-three" for the "yo-ho-ho" is very attractive. The flood of books on piracy and privateering persists, and while that flow seems headed mainly in the direction of *Treasure Island,* some are a great deal better than others. Broadly speaking they fall into three groups: academic histories of piracy and privateering, pot-boilers, and — a much smaller group — books that have a political intent. These groups overlap.

Popular literature on piracy has a long history. It would be reasonable to date it back to books of Alexander Exquemelin (who is known as John Esquemeling in English editions) and Captain Johnson, who many still identify as Daniel Defoe. The confusions of authorship symbolise the importance of contents over provenance. The Dutch original of Exquemelin's *The Buccaneers of America; a True account,* published in 1678, was translated first into German, then into Spanish, English, and French. More recently there have been Italian and Russian versions. The English version has been reissued many times — the library catalogue of the University of California carries at least eighteen different editions published in
England or the United States, in three separate translations. There have been six in the twentieth century alone. Despite the fact that these translations into different languages were often tendentious (sometimes blatantly so), magnifying the role of one country's heroes over another's, Exquemelin's book has been used over and over again as the source book for much writing about pirates. Captain Johnson's *General History of the Pirates*, which stands beside it as the other most important source on piracy, has an equally obscure origin. For many years it was believed that Daniel Defoe wrote it, and although that idea is now largely discredited, we are none the wiser about who Johnson was, nor about his intent. His text has been seen both as a diatribe against piracy and as a source for libertarians seeking heroes. Both Exquemelin and Johnson, for all their shortcomings of history, have provided so much of the evidence for studies of piracy that it is hard to shake free of their influence.

Academic historians writing from documentary and archival sources, rather than merely re-stating published accounts, began examining piracy and privateering around the turn of the century. Stanley Lane-Poole's book on *The Barbary Corsairs* appeared in 1890 and C.H. Haring's pioneering account of *Buccaneers in the West Indies in the Seventeenth Century* was published in 1910.4 Between the wars came encyclopaedia-like treatments like those of Philip Gosse, *The History of Piracy* and *The Pirates Who's Who*, works of reference which contained so few citations that details and ideas cannot be pursued. Gosse straddled the difficult ground between scholarship and popular writing, and the line has been blurred ever since. A great deal of the writing that followed fell firmly on the popular side, much of it consisting of biographies of famous pirates and privateers: Morgan, and — particularly — Drake for example in English and Jean Bart in French. This was a rather nationalistic period: British authors wrote about English pirates and privateers, American authors concentrated on pirates and privateers who had operated out of what would become the United States, while French authors wrote about French privateers and the inhabitants of what had become the French Empire, for attention was not entirely devoted to the activities of Europeans. The North African corsairs received a good deal of attention, but largely from a European point of view.

To an extent the problem was one of sources. It has never been easy to write the pirates' side of the story, since they left very few records. The corsairing states *did* leave records of course, but by and large European and American authors could not understand them because they were in Arabic, or worse still, in Ottoman Turkish. Moreover, what interested European and American authors about North Africa was the fate of captives there rather than the societies which captured them. Thus, American authors produced a good deal about the allegedly forgotten war with Tripoli in 1805 while British authors wrote a great deal about the captives held in Salé, on the Atlantic coast of Morocco and Algiers. The contemporary accounts of captivity were both beguiling and unsympathetic towards North Africans.

After World War II, this began to change. While European writers continued to rely on European documents, they now tried to use them to understand the North African perspective. For instance, in 1957 Sir Godfrey Fisher wrote a diplomatic history of British relations with Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli which was still based largely on British documents.
but which took more account of the objectives of the North African states. It was nevertheless a rather plodding diplomatic and naval history, and therefore rather dull, with little to say about the corsairs themselves.' David Hebb's more recent book on English relations with Algiers and Salé is much more readable partly because it uses the British archives more imaginatively as well as European-language secondary material that is based on indigenous sources.'

There were exceptions to this Eurocentricity, of course. Roger Coindreau's study of Salé was published in 1948. Although it too relied on European primary sources, they were used with great care to describe first an outline of the history of Salé (and its twin town of Rabat, now the Moroccan capital), then presented detailed descriptions and analyses of the organisation of the corsairs, their methods of attack, their ships, and their captains. It suffered from lack of political context — there is not enough on the tumultuous events of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Morocco when the Salé corsairs were at their height — but partly that is because the local sources were indeed very vague. It seems that later historians of Salé, which became a very conservative and religious city once it had put its corsairing past behind it, had no wish to raise memories of the less respectable aspects of their urban past.

By the 1970s books were appearing that took the same approach as Coindreau, using European sources more creatively to try and penetrate corsair and raiding societies. This was a period when historians in Europe and North America were increasingly sensitised by African and Asian nationalisms to seek a local voice. Carl Trocki attempted to provide an "indigenous viewpoint" for Malay sea raiding in the waters around nineteenth-century Singapore, and James Warren did much the same for the Sulu Sea around the Philippines. Both relied on European or European-inspired sources, mainly because there was little alternative. Yet local sources were not used even where that alternative did exist, as in the case of the North African states, particularly Algiers, where a large amount of archival material in Arabic and Turkish survives." Of the two best books on Algiers, one claimed to use Turkish sources. Yet since neither was footnoted, this is difficult to judge. Others stuck to more conventional sources and objects of interest. While Stephen Clissold's book on The Barbary Slaves used European primary and sources with some imagination, Seton Dearden's book on the Qaramanli rulers of Libya was less impressive; it was thoroughly Eurocentric in its approach, and was swiftly superseded by a book that did use some Maltese and Arabic sources. This was Kola Folayan's account of Tripoli under the last of the Qaramanli rulers. Since it was published in Nigeria, this did not have the influence that it might have had. It is extremely difficult to find. There were even larger local archival resources available in Malta. These were used extensively for the first time in 1970 by Peter Earle in a book on Mediterranean corsairing. Although he did not use North African sources, he did consult secondary literature (most of it French) which had. In this way, Earle made the great advance of linking the two great enemy centres of corsairing into a single political, military and (above all) economic system. A few years later Clive Senior took a similar approach when he linked river piracy on the Thames into a continuum that extended to the Caribbean buccaneers and English "renegades" in North Africa.
Both Earle and Senior also amalgamated thematic description and analysis with a biographical approach to corsairs. The same methods were employed by Christopher Lloyd and Peter Kemp in their synthesis of the history of the Caribbean pirates which appeared in 1960. This was an attempt to break away from straight biographies of pirates, an increasingly repetitive genre. As Schweikart and Burg point out, even the best of them, such as Dudley Pope's biography of Morgan, did not stray far from the received wisdom and the published sources. In 1981 Lloyd, writing alone, used the technique again for an account of the English corsairs who operated out of North Africa. By 1986 Robert Ritchie had reversed the process; in an influential book on Captain Kidd he used the biography of a single pirate as the starting point for a study of pirate society and the politics of privateering and suppression.

Academic study of piracy was clearly gaining respectability, a process which was helped by the work of the British maritime historian, John Bromley. By the 1970s he was in full tilt, writing articles about privateering warfare and in particular about French corsairing. The academic respectability of the study of piracy gained even more ground as a result of a conference on piracy and privateering which was organized by the Commission Internationale d'Histoire Maritime/International Commission of Maritime History and held in San Francisco in 1975. The papers were collected in two volumes by the late Michel Mollat as Course et piraterie but the collection has never been widely distributed, and the papers therefore remain scarce to this day. Nevertheless, the conference revealed that a number of themes were emerging that would occupy historians of sea-raiding over the next twenty years.

Pirate historians had already discovered economics. In 1953 Cyrus Karraker published Piracy was a Business (in which he argued that pirates have their modern equivalent in racketeers). He was followed by a number of other economic historians of privateering and piracy. By the 1980s, privateering economics was one of the main areas of attention. The leading exponents have been two British historians — Patrick Crowhurst who, like Bromley, has written extensively about French privateering, and David Starkey, who specialised in privateering out of Devon ports. The American historian, Carl Swanson, put the same economic emphasis into his analysis of colonial American privateering, while the Spanish historian Gonçal Lopez Nadal wrote about Mallorcan corsairs in commercial terms. Lopez Nadal went on to edit a collection of (largely Spanish) conference papers which linked corsairing with smuggling.

Pirate historians also discovered social history. In 1983 Bruce Burg published the provocatively titled Sodomy and the Pirate Tradition, which, not surprisingly, attracted a good deal of attention, not all of it complimentary. Burg was accused of projecting modern concepts backwards in an anachronistic fashion. Nevertheless, the book went to a second edition, in which Burg was pleased to note that one reviewer had said that his book gave "an whole new meaning to the phrase `Jolly Roger'." Around the same time Marcus Rediker was beginning to publish material on the social history of the Atlantic and Caribbean pirates. This he linked to a radical political analysis, fixing piracy as part of the protest of workers against their conditions. Seamen, Rediker said, were "zealous abettors of liberty" whose "militant resistance produced a major breakthrough in libertarian thought that would ultimately lead to revolution." Pirates were part of this movement,
exacting revenge on captains who mistreated their crews, and signalling their rebellion with their black flags depicting "King Death," a symbol that served many purposes: a defiance of danger; a threat to those they attacked; a challenge to the respectable world with its equally respectable flags. 31 Much of the material for Rediker's analysis came from Johnson's General History as well as from trial records.

The radical explanation of piracy was given added weight by one of the most prominent historians of the English Revolution, Christopher Hill. He linked the ideology of some of the Caribbean pirates into the radical ideologies of the Ranters and other sectarians who had fled England for the West Indies at the time of the Restoration:

Former radicals had to adapt to a world in which their cause had been defeated, their ranks hopelessly thinned. The rough equality of pirate life may have been psychologically more congenial than the tensions and economic hazards of a slave-owning society, or the harsh discipline of a naval vessel. 32

Hill went on to compare pirates with the social bandits described by Eric Hobsbawm, only to reject a direct similarity and suggest instead that ideological pirates had more in common with the urban underworld where libertinist ideas found a hearing.

While it would be wrong to deny the ideological content of some pirate thinking, both Hill and Marcus Rediker, who has considerable enthusiasm for it, ignores another of Hobsbawm's categories of bandits, the "avenger" as brute:

...bandits who not only practise terror and cruelty to an extent which cannot possibly be explained as mere backsliding, but whose terror actually forms part of their public image. They are heroes not in spite of the fear and horror their actions inspire, but in some ways because of them. They are not so much men who right wrongs, but avengers, and exereters of power; their appeal is not that of agents of justice, but of men who prove that even the poor and weak can be terrible. 33

These men Hobsbawm described as "public monsters." This might almost be an echo of Johnson's epitaph for Edward Teach, Blackbeard:

Here was an End of that courageous Brute, who might have pass'd in the World for a Heroe, had he been employ'd in a good Cause. 34

That is hardly the eulogy of a freedom-loving Robin Hood.

In the 1980s and 1990s European-language authors discovered Chinese pirates as well. There had, of course, been work on Chinese piracy before — notably Grace Fox's British Admirals and Chinese Pirates. 35 However, such studies were invariably Eurocentric and focussed on suppression. What was now new was the reliance on Chinese sources. Using Chinese material, Ng Chin-Keong linked piracy with smuggling and rebellion in Amoy in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. 36 Dian Murray and Robe
Antony in the United States worked on very similar themes for the period roughly a century or so later.37

These new approaches were not applied to studies of Mediterranean corsairs or Middle Eastern pirates. In the Gulf, Sultan al-Qasimi, the ruler of Sharjah, wrote about the allegations of piracy made by the British against his forebears, arguing that those allegations were really excuses to engage in imperialism.38 But even he relied mainly on British imperial sources. Nor was very much work done in the 1980s on North Africa and Malta, apart from Libya, where the publication or re-publication of the diaries of two European residents — one at the end of the seventeenth, the other at the end of the eighteenth centuries — shed light on the corsairs.39 There were some articles which extended the economic knowledge of corsairing.40 There was also a good overview of the politics of corsairing at Salé.41 The most substantial work on Algiers was on the captives held there and the process of ransoming them.42 With the exception of a work published in Spanish, there has been little follow-up work.43 On the other hand, at the other end of the Mediterranean, Wendy Bracewell brought out a book on a topic of perennial interest, the Uskoks of Senj, maritime bandits of the Croatian (or Yugoslav) coast at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.44

In an article that preceded the publication of her book, Bracewell also launched into the other big theme of the 1980s and 1990s: women pirates.45 The article appeared in a thoroughly obscure Yugoslavian literary journal, which undoubtedly accounts for its lack of influence. Yet the themes it raised — the political attitudes which lie behind depictions of pirate women, and the importance of women as part of an overall pirate and raiding economy — have dominated recent work on women pirates. Dian Murray had raised some of them a few years earlier in an article on the Chinese woman pirate Cheng I Sao (“Madam Cheng”).46 She also contributed a chapter on Cheng I Sao in a highly successful collection edited by Jo Stanley in 1995.47 Both Murray and Bracewell linked the women they describe with the everyday role of women in coastal and raiding communities: they organized raids; they negotiated; and they went to sea because their communities lived on the sea and they were accustomed to it. Even in European (or at least in English) ships, women went to sea more frequently than was once acknowledged.48

Stanley produced her book with the intention of reversing the way in which women in general and women pirates in particular were “written out” of maritime history. As she made clear in the Introduction, the book had a specifically political intention:

*Bold in Her Breeches* is part of a growing international move to carry out historical research and writing that is aware of the structuring effects of class, gender and race. I am proud to be part of the international progressive feminist history movement and to contribute this book to our body of work.49

The several essays in the book acknowledged the more general factors that Murray and Bracewell made plain, yet, in the end, the collection more closely resembled the old-fashioned work on pirate women because of the way in which it personalized its material by focussing on the characters of a few individuals.50 Some were pirate queens like
Artemisia, Grace O'Malley, Lady Killigrew, and Alfild the Dane; others were more workaday figures like Mary Read and Ann Bonny, everyone's favourite women pirates, largely because their stories are so accessible from Johnson's *General History*. Stanley was rightly quite sceptical about the accuracy of the Johnson account, and tried to analyse it as a literary and political representation in order to seek a wider explanation.

By the middle of the 1990s, then, academic writing on the history of sea-raiding was focussed on three main themes: the economics of privateering, the ideology and political significance of piracy, and the importance of women pirates. Interest in the subject was also generated by its immediate relevance: piracy still persisted in the South China Sea and in the Straits of Malacca, where it became a matter of international diplomacy.\(^5\) Most horrible of all was what happened in the Gulf of Siam where women on refugee boats leaving Vietnam were regularly raped by Thai pirates and the men often killed. Roger Villar's account of *Piracy Today* paid rather more attention to the attacks on merchant ships and on European yachts.\(^5\) However, the boatpeople received more detailed coverage in a book edited by Eric Ellen, the director of the International Maritime Bureau, an organisation based in London which concerns itself with marine crime, particularly piracy.\(^5\)

There was also a resurgent popular interest in piracy, partly the result of an extraordinarily successful exhibition at the National Maritime Museum in Britain in 1992. David Cordingly, who was largely responsible for organising the exhibition, wrote a profusely illustrated book to go with it. Cordingly went on to write a full length book about piracy which has quickly become the standard work, although it is confined to the Caribbean and Atlantic — with some references to the Indian Ocean — and leaves out Mediterranean corsairing and Chinese piracy almost completely. It also pays little attention to the economics of piracy. Even so, it covers a great deal of ground, and makes a serious attempt to disentangle the various myths. Cordingly's book was also very well written and attractive, and contributed to the booming public interest in piracy over the past few years.

One result of this public interest has been the republication, yet again, of some of the classics of pirate literature. Rio Grande Press in New Mexico reissued two of Gosse's books (*The Pirates' Who's Who* and *The History of Piracy*) and reprinted Exquemelin's *The Buccaneers of America*. Fern Canyon Press is planning to reissue Johnson's *General History*. The influence of Exquemelin and Johnson seems certain to continue for some time.

Fern Canyon are also responsible for producing *Captured by Pirates*, edited by John Richard Stephens. This is a collection of extracts from published accounts of victims of piracy, chosen apparently for their shock value. The blurb on the back cover is sensationalist in the extreme. Nevertheless, and despite the lurid language, the contents are interesting. Indeed, a number of these accounts are classics, such as Richard Glasspool's account of his experiences at the hands of early nineteenth-century Chinese pirates, which Dian Murray put to considerable use. There is also a well-known account by St. Vincent de Paul of his capture by Tunisian corsairs and an extract from Captain Johnson. Some are less well-known. The editor believes that *A Narrative of the Captivity of John Fillmore and his Escape from the Pirates* has not been reprinted since 1802. A few of the accounts, such
as that of Captain George Roberts (1726) are extremely evocative. Yet with others one wonders why they have been chosen. There are more interesting accounts of captivity in North Africa than St. Vincent de Paul's for example, yet his is the only experience from the Mediterranean. Moreover, the presentation is rather unreliable. Full citations are generally not given; in the case of the rarer works it would be useful to know where they came from in detail. And the editorial work is suspect. Sentences which begin "After the U.S. Navy captured one of his ships on June 10, 1723..." do not inspire confidence.

Still, there are some good things about this collection. In particular, a theme emerges that is worth exploring further, albeit with a certain scepticism. Many of the captives went on to join the pirates and claimed afterwards that they were forced to do so. Aaron Smith, one of the authors reproduced here, had to plead his innocence not once but twice in British courts in the early nineteenth century when charged with voluntarily abetting the pirates he said he had been forced to join. Smith had been captured off Cuba, forced to join his captors after various unpleasant tortures, and finally escaped only to be tried for his life in one of the last piracy trials in Britain. He was acquitted because he persuaded the jury that he had been forced to help the pirates, but then had to go through the whole process again several years later on another count of piracy. The Atrocities of the Pirates is an autobiographical account of his experiences and a newspaper account of the initial trial. It first appeared in London in 1824, and was republished by the famous Golden Cockerel Press in London in 1929. Now it has been republished again, with the addition of a long essay on Smith's subsequent life and his second trial by a descendant, Robert S. Redmond, who, for some strange reason, tells us that he was a British member of parliament for the inland city of Leicester in the 1970s (he does not reveal for which party). This eccentricity aside, the re-edition is a valuable one because of the information it provides about the second trial and the insights into the efforts of the British authorities to drive piracy out.

Another sort of re-edition is of essentially scholarly books. Coindreau's excellent book on the Salé pirates has been reissued in Morocco, with a preface by a prominent Moroccan historian, Mohamed Zniber, that draws attention to its faults — a failure to put the corsairing into a Moroccan political context, and to understand it in terms of resistance to Christian conquest — while praising very highly the quality of the information that it contains. Zniber was undoubtedly right that a reassessment of the political role of the Salé corsairs is long overdue, and particularly an examination of the religious aspects of the war at sea. But that explanation will also have to explain the large number of Europeans who took up residence there — and in Algiers and Tunis and Tripoli — and converted to Islam: what European writers call "renegades."

Even older than Coindreau's book is Ormerod's famous book Piracy in the Ancient World. First published in 1924, it has seen several re-editions since them. This latest version is simply a reprint of the 1924 edition, and preserves the eccentric citation system of scholarship in the 1920s — a good deal of detective work is needed to run some of these references to earth. It does seem a great pity that this particular problem has not been tidied up, because Ormerod's classic study is still immensely valuable. It begins with a fine chapter on the general geographical and political context of piracy in the Mediterranean which draws some interesting parallels with more modern outbreaks of piracy. Particularly
resonant is what Ormerod says about the methods used by the pirates to attack ships as well as villages on shore, and the ways in which their victims tried to protect themselves. The tactic of abandoning the coast entirely for fear of pirates is one that was used in many places at different times — in the seventeenth century, the Chinese authorities cleared the coast around Amoy because it was unable to stop piracy. The second chapter raises the issue of the economics of piracy as "a means of production" and resembles to a remarkable extent some of the more recent work on the economics of privateering. This is followed by two chapters which provide a chronological account of sea raiding in the eastern Mediterranean from the early Egyptian period down to the Cretan-Rhodian war at the end of the 3rd century BC. The fifth chapter is concerned with what Ormerod calls the "western Mediterranean" although most of the action he describes is not situated much further west than Corsica (there is one mention of the Balearics); the final two chapters deal with the Roman Republic's attempts to crush piracy, culminating in Pompey's campaign that began in 67 BC and continued under the Empire. The themes of classical piracy would be echoed by later and geographically remote pirates. For instance, there is a description here of pirates sharing out the proceeds of their raiding in ways that closely resemble the practices of pirates in the Caribbean and in the supposedly proto-anarchist pirate republic in Madagascar in the eighteenth. Could it be that this practice of sharing was a matter of practical organisation among pirates, rather than a specifically ideological statement?

This question of sharing lies at the heart of the economic organisation of sea-raiding, and is one of the principal themes of academic research in the field today. Almost certainly because the economic activities of pirates are much more difficult to quantify than privateers, it is the latter group that is receiving most of the attention, and, as virtually every author on the topic will say, it is often difficult to distinguish between the two. Nevertheless, David Starkey provides a very succinct description of "The Origins and Regulation of Eighteenth-Century Privateering" in the collection edited by Tony Barrow. This is a slim volume of essays produced by a local history group in the north of England and published by a small town publisher. Aside from Starkey's article, which has a wider significance, these articles are all very locally focussed indeed — and some concern press-gangs rather than privateering. Even so, one of the editor's own contributions does for the northeast of England some of what Starkey and others have done for Devon by examining the organisation of privateering, giving details of the numbers, sizes and targets of eighteenth-century privateers operating from Newcastle Sunderland and South Shields. This is useful because it provides evidence that the privateering system was broadly similar over much of England.

Indeed, it was broadly similar over much of the rest of the world. Ocaña Torres demonstrates in detail how it functioned in the Strait of Gibraltar in the eighteenth century. His book focusses on the economic organisation of the corsairs operating from Algeciras, Cadiz and Tarifa. This is a rather difficult book to read, because much of it is made up of lists of the captains and crews of the corsair ships and lists of their prizes. There is not enough analysis here, but Ocaña Torres provides enough material for some interesting facts to emerge. For instance, during the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739-1748), British ships made up the bulk of the prizes, whereas during the American War of Independence, when
Spain was allied with France against Britain, Spanish cruisers took only five British but fourteen Danish and nineteen Swedish ships and vessels. Perhaps there is evidence here of the growing uselessness of corsairing against a major power? There is also good information on the role of women in financing corsair operations, but again it is not made explicit.

The collection edited by Starkey, van Eyck van Heslinga and De Moor, originally papers given at a conference in Holland in 1991, was specifically intended to make this sort of comparison between piracy and privateering in different parts of the world. Not surprisingly it found that there was more in common between systems of privateering than between manifestations of piracy. The first was an activity sanctioned by government, while piracy was a more individualistic enterprise, and (as Starkey points out in his introduction) one that generated fewer documents because it was illegal. Nine out of the fourteen articles are concerned with privateering, with a pronounced emphasis on organisational factors — recruitment, finance, economics. Starkey himself provides a survey of England as a whole over most of the eighteenth century. This is one of the larger time-frames attempted, and may well represent the much greater amount that is known about English privateering. Patrick Crowhurst provides a more chronologically focussed account (1792-1815) of the French Channel ports, while an article by Faye Kert provides a good account of the economics of privateering in North America. There are three articles on Holland, including one by Jan van Zijverden that looks at the three years of the Anglo-Dutch war and suggests that privateering was not profitable enough to make a really large investment worthwhile — a useful corrective to the attention that is usually given to privateering in its heyday. And there are two articles about Danish attempts to protect the neutrality of their shipping from the deprivations of privateers — the effects of privateering on the victims rather than the profits accruing to the privateers are less often covered. This is another difference from writing about piracy, where the sufferings of the victims receive proportionally much more attention, at least in the non-scholarly publications, largely because there are more victim statements than autobiographical accounts by pirates. The situation is reversed for privateering: there are far more documents available on the organisation of privateers (easily accessible and often grouped together) than on their effects (more episodic and more scattered).

The articles on privateering are also Eurocentric in their concern, and centred on northern Europe at that. There is one article on the Mediterranean, by Gonçal Lopez Nadal — again covering nearly all the eighteenth century — but it deals largely with Spain, and to a lesser extent with France. Since we know relatively little about Spanish corsairing, this is no bad thing and Lopez Nadal's account of Spanish changes to corsairing regulations (which match the changes to English law) are very interesting. Lopez Nadal also raises, though not in detail, the effects on the victims on the northern shore of the Mediterranean. It is, however, a shame that there was not space (or perhaps the editors could not find a contributor) for a chapter on North African or Maltese corsairing.

The effects of piracy are pursued with greater vigour by John Anderson, an Australian economic historian who has already written a very important general account of the economic effects of piracy, particularly on the costs to trade. In *Pirates and Privateers* Anderson confines his contribution to "Piracy in the eastern seas" — that is, to
Southeast Asia and China. Not only does he highlight the deleterious effects of piracy on trade, but he also looks at the economic and political background to suppression. Robert Ritchie addresses this last point as well in his article on British attempts to limit privateering in the eighteenth century. Ritchie is concerned largely with the legal and diplomatic handling of privateering, and presents an excellent synopsis, although the delay in the publication of *Pirates and Privateers* means that it was written before the publication of Janice Thomson's much longer survey of this question and so could not take account of it.60

That leaves only three articles that actually deal with pirates themselves. One, by Ghislaine Loyré, concerns the "Living and Working Conditions in Philippine Pirate Communities, 1750–1850" and is an excellent summary not only of her own published work but of others as well, such as James Warren on the Sulu sea. The remaining articles are by two of the big names of the history of piracy, Marcus Rediker and Dian Murray. Murray's article whose title, "Living and Working Conditions in Chinese Pirate Communities, 1750–1850," invites immediate comparison with that of Loyré — is a good account of the operating procedures and social background of Chinese pirates. In his essay, Rediker considerably expands on his and Christopher Hill's ideas about the utopian aspects of piracy, beginning with an account of "Captain Misson" and his settlement at "Libertalia" in Madagascar, a perennial libertarian theme.61 Rediker has no doubt that Misson himself — and Libertalia — are a fiction, but argues that the story itself was part of a popular culture that sought relief for the everyday struggles of men in the idea of a free and just society where things were shared, and where men lived at ease (there is little role for pirate women in this conception). Even so, one still wonders how much of the pirate sharing was based on the necessities of seaborne life, the need for the self-discipline and an interdependency between sailors on board ship that Nicholas Roger described as underpinning maritime life in wooden ships.62 Ormerod's pirates on the Lipari islands certainly had little to do with the spirit of the English Revolution.

Rediker picks up the same theme in his article in *Pirates*, the collection edited by David Cordingly. Not surprisingly, a book edited by a historian of maritime art is superbly illustrated, and this together with its format (coffee-table size and glossy) and its subtitle (*Terror on the High Seas from the Caribbean to the South China Sea*) might lead one to suspect that this was a mere pot-boiler, cashing in on the popularity of pirates. To an extent, of course, it is: it is written in middlebrow, non-academic English, and avoids too much economics. But it is also written by real experts in their fields, although the way in which the same names crop up shows how small is the pool of academic historians who work on piracy and privateering. There is Rediker on the politics of piracy, Dian Murray (again) on China, Eric Ellen, the director of the international Maritime Bureau, on modern piracy and Cordingly himself on pirate maps and pirate explorers. This last article makes an excellent point: that pirates and privateers made a considerable contribution to the history of navigation and exploration; they put a premium on finding small islands and effective routes to attack their prey. Once again, however, it is a bit Eurocentric: the role of the sixteenth-century Ottoman pirate-turned-privateer-turned-admiral, Piri Reis, in producing his sailing guide to the Mediterranean is certainly comparable. (His book, incidentally has recently been reissued in a splendid full colour reproduction of the...
Ottoman Turkish original and its maps, along with a modern Turkish and English translation and, for some odd reason, a transliteration of the Ottoman Turkish). There are also chapters on French and American privateering, southeast Asian piracy and the Caribbean. As well, there is a chapter on Mediterranean corsairing, although it is not as good as the other chapters. A glance at the bibliography shows why: none of the books cited that specifically deal with corsairing were published after 1981. This is not entirely the author's fault, because it reflects the extremely low level of research activity on this region in the last twenty years. In general the bibliographies of the different chapters of this attractive book are very informative.

It is quite a change that a popular book on piracy should have a bibliography at all. The general rule is still that an author will insert no more than a page or two at the back of "further reading" with a hodge-podge of titles, with no real indication on what the text is based. Mistakes are uncritically reproduced over and over again. An example is the case of Benito de Soto, a celebrated pirate who was hanged in Gibraltar, while his crew were hanged in Spain in January 1830. Their ship was originally a Brazilian slaver, Defensor de Pedro, that sailed from Rio de Janeiro in November 1827. The crew mutinied on the west coast of Africa and in 1828 plundered an East Indiaman, the Morning Star, Captain Thomas Gibbs. According to Francis Bradlee in a book on West Indian piracy published in 1923, the name of the Morning Star's Captain was Sauley, and the attack took place in 1832. As he accompanies his account with a picture of the Morning Star sinking, which did not happen, and bloodcurdling talk of "awful savagery," Bradlee is hardly a reliable source. The following year Philip Gosse's Pirates' Who's Who gave the same date of 1832, and stated that de Soto and his mates shipped out of "Buenos Ayres" and that de Soto was sent to Spain to be hanged. Gosse's History of Piracy, published in 1932, gets the date of departure and the date of the attack on the Morning Star correct, omits the date of the pirates' execution but implies that de Soto was hanged in Gibraltar. It is these classics of pirate literature that Fern Canyon and Rio Grande Press are so enthusiastically republishing.

The latest "reference book" to piracy, Rogozinski's Dictionary of Pirates repeats the errors: de Soto's ship was "an Argentinean [sic] slaver" which took the Morning Star in 1832. Rogozinski does not always cite his sources for his entries, though he does in this case: the unreliable Bradlee. But he does not list Gosse's Who's Who at all in his bibliography, which is rather strange. Several other books are also missing from a bibliography in which "Only studies that will be of wide interest are cited." Lloyd's book English Seamen on the Barbary Coast is not there, nor is Bromley's Corsairs and Navies; Burg's Sodomy and the Pirate Tradition is not in, but Dian Murray's book on the South China Coast is, and this is rather strange because he lists Cheng I Sao's name incorrectly. It is listed under "Sao," which is rather like listing Mrs. Thatcher under "Mrs." But Rogozinski is not very good with foreign words. The plural of "Reis" (more correctly Rais, the Arabic for "captain") is not the same as the singular. The origin of "Filibuster" is certainly French, but the French word concerned is "flibustier" not "filibustier." This may be mere carelessness. It is the casual attitude to citing sources that is most irritating. A longish entry about "Homosexuality" provides no sources, not even to quotations, despite a claim in the "Selected Bibliography" that "This list gives the sources of
quotations." [376] Long entries on "Prostitutes" or "Religion" come without any ideas on further reading. The effect is even more bizarre in some of the shorter entries. One entry reads, in its entirety:

"TRETI, CAPTAIN (Maltese Corsair, Mediterranean; 1676) Captain Treti received partial payment of his share of booty." [346]

An entry as short as this would only be useful if there were some way to follow it up, but again no sources given. In fact the information almost certainly came from Earle, who describes the process by which Treti got paid as part of the regular system of dividing up prizes in Malta. Indeed, it would have made sense for Rogozinski to have cross-referenced Treti to his entry on "booty," except that that, too, has no sources or information about further reading. It is a great pity: Rogozinski has clearly done a great deal of work, but the result is so frustrating.

After this, it is almost a relief to turn to a book that has no great pretension to factual accuracy, for its thrust is elsewhere. The Klausmann-Meinzerin-Kuhn book about women pirates comes in a pink cover with an unattributed picture of a bare-breasted woman in a classical pose. To this painting is added a pirate flag in a way that makes it fairly clear that it has been superimposed: there is no flag pole, for example, it simply flutters provocatively and unsupported over the woman's head. The book has much the same effect.

Women Pirates is divided into two parts. The first by Klausmann and Meinzerin is divided into four geographical sections (China, the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, and the Caribbean) and contains usually biographies of women pirates with, in each case, a recipe "From the Galley." There are two introductions. Klausmann's makes it clear that she decided to research the topic when lesbian feminists took over a Rhine steamer in 1990 and called themselves "Pirate Women against Patriarchy," while Meinzerin's situates the topic within the mythology of the sea as a site of feminine power and of danger to men. They have an anarcho-feminist intent. The authors have clearly done a good deal of research finding their subjects. All the obvious women pirates are there: Cheng I Sao, Artemisia, Lady Killigrew, Grace O'Malley and, of course Bonny and Read. But there are some interesting and less-known additions: the fifteenth century Moroccan corsair-organiser Sitt al-Hurra (there is no evidence that she ever went to sea), the intriguing oral history of Folka ten Broke of the East Frisian islands, and the Filipino woman pirate called Linda that a French family ran across in the 1980s:

Linda is both a pirate and a mother. During the day she raids ships, possibly operating a machine gun, and during the evening she cooks rice and fish for her children.67

This is not an academic treatise on piracy. Rather, it is designed to stir the reader up politically. Pirate women become a symbol of a challenge to male-dominated order and to academic treatises in particular. Hence the recipes, perhaps, and more provocingly the assertion that Bartholomew Robe‌rt‌s, one of the most famous pirates of all, may have been
a woman. Having raised the possibility, the authors then refer to Roberts throughout as "she" basing their argument on a picture of Roberts with "thigh muscles like Martina Navratilova," on Roberts' refusal to drink alcohol, curse or smoke, on Roberts' partiality to tea and fruit juice, refined language, gaudy clothes, and dislike of women aboard ship. "Black Barty was also very open and creative with respect to the visual arts" — the visual arts in question being the design of a succession of pirate flags:

The skull with grappling knife was followed by a creation with the form of Bartholomew Roberts herself, holding a flaming sword in one hand and an hourglass in the other standing on a skull between each foot.68

Some of my students were quite cross when they read this, but surely that was the intention? If the purpose is to challenge the male-dominated academic assumptions, what better way to do so than by provoking the reader with unprovable assertions? After all, a good deal of male-oriented writing about pirates is just as ill-founded. The reader is presented with a spectacle that shakes his (or her) grasp of reality.

The second part of the book, by Gabriel Kuhn, is a more orthodox libertarian claim for pirates as anarchists, though Kuhn is careful at the start to exclude Vikings, ordinary sea-robbers and privateers. These had no political intent, therefore they are not pirates. The point is well made. What follows is well argued (though not always accurate). Essentially pirates were anarchists because they raided the rich, and rejected capitalist forms of accumulation: that is why they squandered all their money, a trait for which pirates were famous. And they organised autonomously, subject to no rules but their own. But it does rather undercut the idea that Klausmann and Meinzerin uphold of, say, Sitt al-Hurra, the ruler of Tetuan, or Lady Killigrew as pirates.

Peter Lamborn Wilson is another anarchist with some analytic power to his writing. Wilson has a reputation as a student of Sufism, as well as a writer on anarchism, under the pseudonym Hakim Bey. In Pirate Utopias he picks up Christopher Hill's idea that many Caribbean pirates were seeking an ideological refuge and applies it to the "renegades" in North Africa, and particularly in Salé. Morocco at the time was politically fragmented between those who sought a religious justification for revolt and those in authority over them (or who would have liked to be so) who sought a religious justification for a "divine right of Sultans."69 Salé, with its fluid political setup and corsairs of many national origins who divided the booty up between them, was in the first camp. Seen from the other side, Europeans who "turned Turk," as the phrase was at the time, were doubly enemies: they attacked ships and they attacked Christians. They were enemies of (the Christian) God and so of mankind, just like the pirates of the Caribbean. Hill himself has said that he finds Wilson's book convincing, and in a general way there is a good deal to be said for it.70 It is easy to see that Englishmen angered by the failure of their revolution might seek among their opponents clear enemies, particularly when political and economic life was communally organised. But Wilson does not really prove it. There is a coincidence in timing but no coherent body of evidence to back it up — nothing, for example to show that the Englishmen in Salé studied the Islamic religion or Sufism. Even so, this book is backed by considerable research. Wilson has gone through the English-
language literature on the renegades with care — he makes great use of Lloyd's book on North Africa — and his portrait of their society is a vivid one. It is also an interesting book, because it opens up ideas about the Salé corsairs that break out of the Eurocentric, conservative stereotypes about slaves and renegades, Muslim enemies and Christian heroes.

New thinking is what is needed, certainly. Starkey and others have made an enormous advance by raising the economic history of piracy and privateering as an issue of importance; Murray and Bracewell set the ground work for serious thought about pirate women; and the anarchists and libertarians have raised some good questions about the relationship between pirates and power. Yet huge gaps remain, of which the most glaring is the Eurocentrism of pirate studies. Murray has brought Chinese pirates into the mainstream, but Japanese and Indian pirates remain on the academic margins, and, Wilson apart, the abandonment of serious interest in the Mediterranean (even Hebb, in the end, is mainly concerned with English policy) has meant that issues of religious war or economic struggle have not been raised at all.

Pirate histories are all too often still too easy, with writers and, especially readers, seduced by the romanticism and the dream, and the need to find heroes, or heroines. As one of my more starry-eyed students put it in a take-home exam:

They drank rum every night and played on the ocean all day. Even though the profession had a high mortality, it would have been worth living for a while, just for the adventure.

NOTES

* C.R. Pennell is al-Tajir Lecturer in Middle Eastern History and Senior Lecturer in the Department of History, University of Melbourne. He has written on Libyan corsairing in the seventeenth century and Moroccan piracy in the nineteenth century, and teaches a course on the history of piracy.


3. Captain Charles Johnson, A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates and also their Policies, Discipline and Government from their first Rise and Settlement in the Island of Providence, in 1717, to the Present Year, 1724, with the Remarkable Actions and Adventures of the Two Female Pyrates, Mary Read and Anne Bonny, to which is Prefix'd an Account of the Famous Captain Avery and his Companions; with the Manner of his Death in England, ed. Manuel Schornhorn (London, 1972). Schornhorn accepts the attribution to Daniel Defoe, giving him as the author, but otherwise this is the most scholarly edition.

4. Stanley Lane-Poole, The Barbary Corsairs (London, 1890); and C.H. Haring, The Buccaneers in the West Indies in the XVII Century (London, 1910)

5. There have been many editions of Gosse's works since the first editions in the 1920s and


28. Ibid. (2nd ed.), xvii.

29. Marcus Rediker, "Under the Banner of King Death": The Social World of Anglo-American Pirates 1716-1726," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, XXXVIII (1981); and Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Mer-


33. E.J. Hobsbawm, Bandits (Harmondsworth, 1972), 58.

34. Johnson, General History, 82.


42. Ellen G. Friedman, Spanish Captives in North Africa in the Early Modern Age (Madison, WI, 1983).

43. Emilio Sola, Cervantes y la Berbería: Cervantes, mundo-turco-berberisico y servicios secretos en la época de Felipe II (Madrid, 1996).


49. Stanley (ed.), Bold in Her Breeches, xvii.
Who Needs Pirate Heroes?

50. Stanley, *Bold in Her Breeches*, xiv, even claimed in her introduction that there were “at least ten” women pirates.


55. Ng, *Trade and Society*, 51.


58. Tony Barrow, “Make Your Fortune, My Boys! and Drub the Dutch: Privateering and the North East Coast in the later Eighteenth Century,” in Barrow (ed.), *Pressgangs and Privateers*, 52-64.


64. Francis Boardman Crowninshield Bradlee, *Piracy in the West Indies and its Suppression* (Salem, 1923).


