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THE SWEET TRADE REVIVED

Women Pirates and the Politics of the Jolly Roger. ULRIKE KLAUSMANN, MARION MEINZERIN & GABRIEL KUHN. New York: Black Rose Books, 1997. x + 280 pp. (Paper US\$ 23.99)

Pirates! Brigands, Buccaneers, and Privateers in Fact, Fiction, and Legend. JAN ROGOZINSKI. New York: Da Capo Press, 1996. xvi + 398 pp. (Paper US\$ 19.95)

Sir Francis Drake: The Queen's Pirate. HARRY KELSEY. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998, xviii + 566 pp. (Cloth US\$ 35.00)

A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates. CAPT. CHARLES JOHNSON (edited and with introduction by DAVID CORDINGLY). New York: Lyons Press. 1998 [Orig. 1724]. xiv + 370 pp. (Cloth US\$ 29.95)

The subject of piracy lends itself to giddy jokes about parrots and wooden legs, but also talk of politics, law, cultural relativism, and of course Hollywood. This selection of new books on piracy in the Caribbean and beyond touches on all these possibilities and more. They include a biography of the ever-controversial Elizabethan corsair, Francis Drake; an encyclopedia of piracy in history, literature, and film; a reissued classic eighteenth-century pirate prosopography; and an anarchist-feminist political tract inspired by history and legend. If nothing else, this pot-pourri of approaches to piracy should serve as a reminder that the field of pirate studies is not only alive and well, but gaining new ground.

Harry Kelsey's *Sir Francis Drake* is perhaps the first full-length biography of this famous Elizabethan raider to treat him as an unequivocal rogue from start to finish. In less able hands, such an approach might have degenerated to needless defamation or at least cranky debunking, but this biogra-

pher finds Drake the more fascinating for his numerous apparent character flaws and explores each to maximum explanatory potential. Kelsey's Drake was unremarkable as a patriot or even naval tactician, but he was nevertheless fearless and cunning in certain circumstances. As one would expect from a pirate, Francis Drake seems to have been innately impetuous and opportunistic, and his fortunes resemble those of a compulsive gambler. The author highlights numerous incidents in which Drake seems to have acted in order to save himself rather than risk life or limb for Queen and companions; that such incidents span his career from San Juan de Ulúa (Mexico) in 1568 to the bungled Lisbon raid of 1589 lends weight to Kelsey's generally unflattering conclusions. With crewmembers Drake could be an overbearing bully, quick to imagine conspiracies and on more than one occasion willing to have underlings executed for supposed mutiny when safely out of reach of English courts. Such was his reputation for harsh and even dishonest treatment of crews that he had trouble finding recruits in the 1580s and 1590s, when his reputation abroad was well established.

The story of Francis Drake as bombastic bully might not compel save for the extraordinary trajectory of the pirate's life. Even in the most pedestrian treatment, Drake's exploits seem so inherently dramatic as to border on the fantastic. Kelsey's narrative is written in an earnest, workmanlike style, only occasionally prolix and repetitious, but doggedly critical throughout of a subject whose reputation has been burnished to a high glow. Many have tried to seize upon a piece of Drake's legacy, and Kelsey questions the legitimacy of several such attempts. He examines the famous pirate's claims to "New Albion," a mysterious site apparently located along the California coast touched on during Drake's 1577-80 circumnavigation of the globe, for example, carefully pointing out inconsistencies in the evidence and offering alternative interpretations. The author's knowledge of Spanish and thorough use of Spanish sources is evident here, as in his discussion of Drake's inflated reputation, particularly in the Spanish-Portuguese imperial realm.

As Kelsey notes, Philip II was himself less than terrified of Drake; the Spanish king was not much concerned by small numbers of pirates in the Indies, but greater English naval designs in Europe greatly interested him, particularly in the later 1580s. Even Drake's navigational expertise is doubted, since he often traveled with Portuguese and Spanish pilots and just as often relied on stolen charts, or *derroteros*, to find his way. That Drake was a pirate rather than a privateer (i.e. a corsair operating with explicit royal sanction) most of his life is stressed throughout, at times relying more on character judgment than legal perspective. Drake's participation in the African slave trade, on the other hand, is rightly contextualized; Kelsey reminds the reader that in Elizabeth's day slaving was an obscure, but hardly noble profession for an Englishman. An incident of sexual abuse of a female African slave in

the Pacific is likewise treated in a straightforward manner, further evidence of Drake's selective approach to morality (noted by his English contemporaries). Along the same lines, Kelsey points out the inconsistencies in Drake's approach to religious crusading. It seems clear from the evidence presented that the pirate's devotion to Protestantism was strongest when it justified acts of pillage, or served to aid in gathering information. For the most part, Drake seems to have preferred pretext to preaching.

In sum, *Sir Francis Drake: The Queen's Pirate* offers an alternative, "warts-and-all" view of this nearly ubiquitous Elizabethan sea-dog, a fine companion to John Sugden's somewhat more traditional but equally compelling *Sir Francis Drake* (1990). The author's reliance on primary sources and careful sorting of fact and legend lend great credibility to the arguments, and also provide new details on some voyages. Illustrations are well chosen and finely reproduced, and the numerous maps tracing individual voyages are extremely helpful. Though at times heavy-handed with regard to issues of personal character, Kelsey's methodical treatment of many incidents involving plunder in the sixteenth-century Caribbean are a valuable addition to the region's historiography.

If one doubts the staying power of the Drake legend, particularly in the twentieth century, one might consult Jan Rogozinski's *Pirates! An A-Z Encyclopedia*. This richly illustrated encyclopedia of piracy in world history and culture will certainly come in handy for students, teachers, historians, and, perhaps especially, screenwriters. Similar, and certainly complementary to David F. Marley's fine reference dictionary, *Pirates and Privateers of the Americas* (1994), Rogozinski's *Pirates!* provides brief entries discussing everything from the film *Abbott and Costello Meet Captain Kidd* to "Zenoctes," arch-pirate of ancient Cilicia. Rogozinski brings a truly encyclopedic knowledge of history, literature, and film to this volume, and his background in French history is evident in the excellent entries for the Barbary Coast corsairs (the seemingly innumerable *reis* of Algiers, Tripoli, and neighboring ports), and also the French Caribbean, particularly via the works of DuTertre, Charlevoix, and Labat.

Entries related to Spanish and Dutch enterprises are also valuable and nearly exhaustive, as are numerous English slang terms that tend to be misapplied or anachronistic. "Walking the plank," for example, was apparently a fancy of nineteenth-century fiction writers, not an historically-documented pirate practice. Though the rather extensive discussion of the term "admiral" traces Arabic and Spanish roots, a second usage, meaning "flag-ship," or in the Spanish, "second-in-command" (*almiranta*), something often discussed by buccaneers as evidenced by their journals, is not mentioned. But this is a minor quibble considering the breadth of coverage offered. Also, though statements such as "Caribbean pirates treated black sailors with color-blind pragmatism" (p. 28) are no doubt exaggerations,

they do fit into the revisionist tradition that since the 1980s has painted the buccaneers as rowdy democrats willing to jettison prevailing notions of race and class. In general, Rogozinski is careful to highlight African and Afro-American participation in both pirate raids and defensive actions against them, an admirable shift from an older historiography that largely ignored agency or even involvement of people of color. Though occasionally pedantic with regard to such things as the use of earrings and the practice of tattooing, *Pirates!* is a most useful addition to the growing body of pirate-related reference sources.

Another topic of debate since the late 1980s dismissed or ignored by Rogozinski is the authorship of *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*, first published in London in 1724. Long attributed to the inevitable Daniel Defoe, this classic has been handsomely (and economically) reproduced by the Lyons Press, accompanied by a compact but informative introduction by the renowned pirate scholar, David Cordingly. Cordingly not only brings the reader up to date on scholarship regarding Captain Charles Johnson (not Defoe, it is claimed, but rather an experienced sea captain and possible ex-pirate), but also provides useful annotation, a glossary, and a select bibliography. The biographical vignettes that make up the bulk of Johnson's book are as fascinating to read today as they must have been in Robert Walpole's England, and they are no doubt what motivated the new edition. Like moral fables, the stories trace an arc for each pirate from origins, to rise, to usually disastrous fall. Thus we follow the bizarre trajectories of, to name a few, John Avery, Edward Teach (a.k.a. Blackbeard), Charles Vane, Bartholomew Roberts, William Kidd, and the best-known of all women pirates, Ann Bonny and Mary Read.

Aside from A.O. Exquemelin's *Buccaneers of America* (first published in 1674), no other single source on the history of piracy has been so influential, or so misused. For example, although historians have proved much of Johnson's material to be historically credible, his work has been so widely read and greatly relied upon that the greater dimensions of piracy as a phenomenon in the early modern Americas have become skewed in favor of these particular Anglo-American rogues and their misdeeds. Influential writers working with mostly English sources, such as David Cordingly (1997) and Marcus Rediker (1987), have tended to follow rather than challenge this long-standing trend. Though certainly no fault of Johnson's, this tendency in the scholarship could stand further correction. Such has been the project of historians working in the wake of the Hispanist Clarence Haring, among them Kenneth Andrews, Peter Bradley, Peter Earle, Peter Gerhard, Cornelis Goslinga, Paul Hoffman, Manuel Lucena Salmoral, David Marley, Carla Rahn Phillips, and others. As more French, Dutch, Spanish, and other sources come to light, the larger picture of early modern

piracy will no doubt become clearer than the one suggested by Johnson's vivid *General History*.

Another relatively long-standing issue of debate in the history of piracy has been the role of women, either as pirates or as accessories of one sort or another. Such women appear throughout Rogozinski's encyclopedia, particularly in references to Hollywood, but in *Women Pirates and the Politics of the Jolly Roger* German free-lance writers Ulrike Klausmann, Marion Meinzerin, and Gabriel Kuhn turn the spotlight directly on women pirates. They offer up a mix of fact, legend, savory recipes, and political dicta regarding women and piracy throughout world history by region, from east to west.

To begin with East Asia is a wise choice, in fact, since this is the only region in the world where more than a few women engaged in piracy first-hand, at least according to surviving records. First treated is a legendary woman pirate of Chinese antiquity, Ch'iao K'uo Fū Jên, followed by the early nineteenth-century Lady Ch'ing. This chapter should be compared to Diane Murray's fine article in Jo Stanley's *Bold in her Breeches: Women Pirates across the Ages* (1995:203-39). Murray's examination of the fascinating life of this former Cantonese prostitute, also known as Cheng I Sao, would offer interested readers added depth and historicity. There is a break in the swashbuckling in Klausmann *et al.*, to discuss food (each regional section contains an interruption "from the galley"), in this case shark-fin soup. The remainder of the Asia section drifts from vague discussion of gender roles in China to the Opium Wars of the early nineteenth century, followed by a brief treatment of South China Sea piracy in the early twentieth century. This section strongly suggests, but does not prove, that this activity was dominated by women. A case treated in some detail is that of Lai Sho Sz'en, a Chinese woman who engaged in acts of piracy and privateering against the Japanese during the turbulent 1930s. The final entry for Asia regards an account of shadowy women pirates in the 1990s Philippines.

From East Asia *Women Pirates* moves to the Mediterranean and a discussion of legendary figures active in ancient Greece and Asia Minor (also discussed by Jo Stanley, above), among them Elissa, Artemisia, and the third-century-BCE Illyrian queen, Teuta. After a recipe for grilled eels, attention is turned to the somewhat better-documented sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Here in the midst of the North African struggle against Christian Europe one finds an exiled Andalusian *morisca* named Sida, who became a corsair leader at the Moroccan port of Tetuan in the age of the Barbarossa brothers of Algiers (ca. 1500-46). Women could also be victims in this business, and the final Mediterranean tale, that of the Marquess de Fresne, is not about a woman pirate but rather a woman taken captive by a Barbary renegade.

In the Atlantic, Viking women such as the legendary Alvilda (or Alfild) led the way in pillaging unwary neighbors for a time. The Vikings were a hard act to follow, but the authors manage to revive little-known stories of late medieval women pirates in France and Germany, follow them with a recipe for North Sea-style cod stew, and finish with the dramatic life and exploits of sixteenth-century Irish pirate leader Grace O'Malley. The next section, treating the Caribbean, discusses a range of cases, from a supposed female buccaneer on Tortuga named Jacquotte Delahaye to the better-known stories of Ann Bonny and Mary Read, central figures in Johnson's *General History of the Pirates*. After an interlude of St. Domingue-style roast pork, à la Père Labat, the discussion turns to Anne Dieu-le-veut, the pistol-wielding wife of Dutch buccaneer Laurens de Graaf. The most provocative chapter in the book asks whether the famous early eighteenth-century pirate Bartholomew Roberts was in fact a woman. This may not be an impossibility, but the evidence presented does not go far beyond describing "thigh muscles like Martina Navratilova" (p. 179) and a seemingly un-pirate-like attention to tidiness and temperance. This piquant excursion — one of several in this generally breezy collection — is thoughtfully followed by a recipe for "Piquant Shark Schnitzel."

Women Pirates steers away from epicurean delights in a political essay by Gabriel Kuhn that attempts to link pirates from the so-called "golden age of piracy" (ca. 1690-1720) to more recently articulated doctrines of anarchism. This is not the first time such a connection has been made, but Kuhn's effort is notable for cleaving to a very rigid definition of the word "pirate"; in essence, the term is pruned of its uglier pecuniary, or "accumulative," branches to render the true pirate a natural anarchist. Fundamental aversion to private property was rarely proclaimed by early modern sea predators, and some of the most famous, such as Francis Drake, Piet Heyn, and Henry Morgan, were avid seekers of wealth as a means to landed gentility. Even among lesser figures, such as the survivors of a South Sea raid captured in Tidewater Virginia in 1688, parting with "baggs of Spanish money" was only done with much grief and years of lawsuits. Pirates throughout history have flouted the laws and mores of land and sea, and some have found innovative ways to redistribute wealth. Still, as these provocative new titles on piracy in history and legend remind us, from a distance it can be difficult to distinguish sharks from dolphins.

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