

## Chapter 3

# CROSS-DRESSING ON THE MARGINS OF EMPIRE: WOMEN PIRATES AND THE NARRATIVE OF THE CARIBBEAN

*Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert*

*To my young friend Aryeh Gold-Parker,  
who so kindly lent me his copy of  
The Man Whose Mother Was a Pirate*

Nearly 300 years after they sailed the Caribbean Sea from the Bahamas to Jamaica with “Calico” Jack Rackam’s crew, pirates Anne Bonny and Mary Read remain the region’s most infamous women at sea.<sup>1</sup> Their piratical careers, which ended with their capture and trial in November 1720, have fascinated writers from Captain Charles Johnson (the first chronicler of their adventures, once thought to be a pseudonym for Daniel Defoe) to the present, being recounted in countless stories, songs, novels, plays, movies, and children’s books.<sup>2</sup> The enduring fascination of their story has been doubtless the result of their gender, of their irruption into a quintessentially male world, and of the titillation of their adventures in a highly eroticized environment. They have retained their hold on the popular imagination because of the protean nature of what is known of their personalities and adventures: just enough documentation of their escapades has survived to anchor them firmly in the history of the Caribbean at a specific time and place; enough remains tantalizingly in mystery to give the imagination endless wings.

Writers throughout the last three centuries have woven countless narratives around the erotic possibilities of Anne Bonny and Mary Read’s

cross-dressing adventures in that most male and most lawless of possible settings—the eighteenth-century pirate ship. I would like, however, to claim them for the Caribbean margins in which popular versions of early colonial history begin to be told. Taking my cue from the earliest interpretations of their story and from their connection to a crucial period in West Indian history—when the pressures of European competition are brought to bear on the Spanish empire and the region begins to define itself in more complex terms—I would like to examine the ways in which the various retellings of Bonny and Read's piratical careers become ways of narrating and interpreting the Caribbean.

The earliest extant sources of the Bonny and Read story, *The Tryals of Captain John Rackam and other Pyrates* (1721),<sup>3</sup> a pamphlet printed in Jamaica within days of their arrest and trial (and sent by the Jamaican governor to London in lieu of his official report), and Johnson's *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*, published in 1724,<sup>4</sup> make much of their being women. Their tales are most decidedly "engendered" by the thrill of their male attire, by the play of concealments and disclosure of their breasts that punctuates the narrative of their adventures, and by their ultimate reprieve from the gallows by the plea of "their bellies" (the fact that they both claimed to be pregnant at the time of their conviction and sentence to execution). The constant shifting of the boundaries between their male activities and their female essences will always be at the center of any narration of their real or imagined adventures—ideal canvases on which to deploy the constant shifting of national and geographic boundaries that typify Caribbean history in the early decades of the eighteenth century.

The salient points of their story, as given by Johnson, whom we must trust (despite many obvious inventions) as their earliest biographer, are as follows. Mary Read, an illegitimate child, had been raised as a boy by her mother in a fraudulent attempt to pass her off as the legitimate infant she had lost just prior to the girl's birth. At thirteen she had been put into service as a footboy in a brothel, but soon tiring of this employment had sailed in a man-of-war to become a soldier in Flanders. Smitten with love for a fellow soldier, she had disclosed her true gender, and having refused a sexual liaison outside of marriage, they had been married with great fanfare. After her husband's premature death, however, she had again joined the army, but seeing very little possibility of advancement, sailed for the West Indies. En route she was kidnapped by pirates, whom she joined. When her ship was captured by a Jamaican warship in 1720, Anne Bonny was among

her companions. It is quite clear from the tone of Johnson's narrative that of the two pirates, Mary Read was his favorite, "for he could always find some means of excusing her actions or praising her purity."<sup>5</sup>

Bonny was the illegitimate daughter of a parlour maid and a prosperous Irish lawyer who, faced with the scandal of his adulterous relationship, left Ireland and his wife for South Carolina with his lover and daughter. There he had become the owner of a plantation, and Anne enjoyed very comfortable circumstances until her rebellious ways (exemplified primarily by her penchant for cross-dressing and preference for male companions and manly pursuits) and a misguided marriage to a poor seaman led her to be cut off from home and fortune. Having gone to Providence Island, then a refuge for pirates, with her husband, Anne encountered "Calico" Jack Rackam, who enticed her into leaving her husband and coming aboard his ship dressed as a man, thus beginning her career as a cross-dressing piratical marauder.

There is in their stories, which Johnson inserts in the picaresque tradition that produced, in the same year, Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, an emphasis on disguise and guile, on masquerade and subterfuge, that rests on the calculated concealment and unveiling of the women's true gender identity. The allure of their tale for the mass public of the period, as culled by Johnson from various newspaper accounts and bestselling pamphlets, rests on the skillful structuring of his narrative around carefully spaced incidents of near-discovery or intentional revelation of the women's true nature. Their story, chroniclers would write later, is particularly remarkable for the extraordinary circumstance of the "weaker" sex assuming (through its adoption of male piratical attire) a character "peculiarly distinguished for every vice that can disgrace humanity, and at the same time for the exertion of the most daring, though brutal, courage." Of Mary's mother, Johnson writes that she "bred up her daughter as a boy, and when she grew up to some sense, she thought proper to let her into the secret of her birth, to induce her to conceal her sex" (131). Anne's father had likewise "put [her] into breeches as a boy" in order to deceive his legal wife, leading the child into regarding male attire as the easiest way to subvert the limitations of female life. Their subsequent adventures, as soldiers and pirates, would only be possible once cross-dressing had become second nature to them.

Cross-dressing, Marcus Rediker reminds us in his article "When Women Pirates Sailed the Seas," was a "deeply rooted underground tradition" in Read and Bonny's time, somewhat common to young, single, usually illegitimate women of humble origin.<sup>6</sup> Society offered few opportunities for women to break out of their sharply defined positions, and cross-dressing

opened fantastic vistas in comparison. Bonny and Read, Rediker argues, perfectly exemplified what other researchers have identified as the two main reasons women chose for impersonating men: for Read it meant the possible escape from a life of poverty, for Bonny the satisfaction of her instincts for love and adventure.<sup>7</sup> The little that is known of Mary Read's career underscores the link between economic necessity, cross-dressing, and piracy. There were few careers in eighteenth-century England open to illegitimate young women with no connections or "characters": servitude, if they were fortunate; crime and prostitution if they were not. The threat of illness, starvation, or the dreaded workhouse was always before them. Cross-dressing gave Mary Read access to itinerant occupations such as foot or errand boy, which provided helpful and sometimes profitable connections to the criminal subculture,<sup>8</sup> and later soldiering.

Although not a widespread practice, cross-dressing was by all evidence common enough in reality, fiction, and drama. The London press occasionally reported on real-life heroines who dressed *en cavalier* to follow their lovers into adventure and battle; and biographical works such as the *Life and Adventures of Mrs. Christian Davies* (1740) or *The Female Soldier: Or the Surprising Life and Adventures of Hannah Snell* (1750) gave a peculiar notoriety to the cross-dressing heroine. Likewise, in fiction, Daniel Defoe's popular picaresque heroine, Moll Flanders, was a frequent cross-dresser; and it is obvious, from the number of cross-dressing heroines we find in the plays of Shakespeare, Aphra Behn, William Wycherley, George Farquhar, and other leading dramatists of the preceding period, that the theatergoing public found the type diverting enough. Cross-dressing women were often celebrated in popular ballads, then at the height of their popularity, and Anne and Mary's adventures would themselves be the subject of many such ditties. "With pitch and tar her hands were hard/Tho' once like velvet soft," claims one, "She weighed the anchor, heav'd the lead/And boldly went aloft."<sup>9</sup> Dianne Dugaw, in her various studies on women and popular balladry in England, writes of these sailing and soldiering women disguised as men—"rambling female sailors," as in the title of a popular ballad—as "a gender-confounding ideal of womanly behavior which defies simple-minded explanations of human sexuality."<sup>10</sup> In her assessment, these ballads, which spoke to an audience of common people, open a space for the type of heroine "whose stories rarely surface in the annals of 'history'" (183).

There is also ample evidence in the period of our heroines' adventures, moreover, of a fascination with the earthiest aspects of female cross-dressing. The anonymous *The Life and Adventures of Mrs. Christian Davies*

(1740), the biography of Mother Ross, who saw service under the Duke of Malborough in the Low Countries—a book also attributed to Daniel Defoe—tells in great detail "how women performed a certain natural operation without being discovered."<sup>11</sup> This feat Mother Ross had accomplished through the use of a "urinary instrument" whose description defies the imagination. Another historian of piracy will excuse his interest in the most prurient aspects of female cross-dressing by arguing that "it is impossible to discover the truth about these unique women pirates without some consideration of the usual sanitary arrangements on a sloop."<sup>12</sup> The detailed inquiry into the minutest details of cross-dressed life on board pirate and navy ships is indicative of the prurient interest in the materiality of the female body and the intricacies of its concealment that has contributed to the lasting appeal of Read and Bonny's tale.

*I confess I am malicious enough to desire that the world should see,  
to how much better purpose the Ladies travel than their Lords;  
and that, whilst it is surfeited with Male travels, all in the same  
tome, and stuf with the same trifles; a lady has the skill to strike  
out a new path, and to embellish a worn-out subject, with variety  
of fresh and elegant entertainment.*

—Mary Astell, *Letters* (1785)<sup>13</sup>

Bonny and Read, although travelers, were not writers—their legacy is not among the numerous travel books produced in the eighteenth century, some of them by women. As Thomas Curley writes in *Samuel Johnson and the Age of Travel*,

The number of travel-books issuing from presses underscores their overwhelming popularity in the 18th century. Between 1660 and 1800 eight encyclopedic collections and forty five smaller compilations appeared in England. Besides the major works, there were thousands of individual accounts and miscellanies of local tours, distant expeditions, and Continental travels. If we include publications from the Continent, the number of all European collections of voyages and travels would alone mount to well over a hundred voluminous productions in several editions and translations.<sup>14</sup>

Most of these travelers, however, were men. Women did not travel as often as men did, since they could not do so independently, nor could they venture safely (or so was the belief at the time) into what were considered dangerous or far-away destinations.<sup>15</sup> It was forbidden by social conven-

tion. Women are thus at a disadvantage as potential writers of travelogues, as they were at a disadvantage as travelers. Those women who wrote about their journeys belonged to the middle- and upper classes—Aphra Behn, Mrs. Hester Lynn Thrale, Mary Morgan, Mrs. Mary Ann Hanway, Ann Radcliffe, and Mrs. Kindersley, among others<sup>16</sup>—worlds apart from the milieu that produced an at-best semiliterate Mary Read. Mrs. Hanway, writing in the preface to her *A Journey to the Highlands of Scotland* (1776), speaks of her reasons for traveling as stemming from a “sentimental” impulse:

I resolved to travel rather critically than casually, rather to accommodate my friends with information than merely to gratify the greediness of vacant curiosity. The consequences were, I did not suffer the postilion to indulge his professional passion, to pass briskly through any parts of cultivated country, or rattle rapidly over the pavement of towns, that were fertile of remarks, but ordered him to move *sentimentally*; in a word, I rode pencil in hand, employing myself in drawing a sketch of the landscape, whether of hill or valley, morass or mountain, as it lay before me . . .<sup>17</sup>

The statement is a remarkably revealing one, as it speaks volubly of class and privilege; she is in a position to instruct her friends, give orders to the postilion, and survey the landscape proprietarily. Bonny and Read’s relationship to the landscape traveled is of a different sort altogether. They must propel themselves forward without aid from postilions and—having undertaken their journeys without “a view to writing and publishing their observations for the benefit of travellers and the information of the curious”<sup>18</sup>—are without the means to instruct. As pirates they inhabit the margins of society and discourse; as sailors—workers, albeit criminally employed—they lack the leisure to travel *sentimentally* across the landscape and therefore are not at liberty to write. Their tales come to us second-hand, as multiple interpretations of the stories they wrote into history. Not having written their own accounts, they have become the heroines of a multiplicity of fictions.

Bonny and Read, like Hannah Snell—the unlettered daughter of a Worcester hosier who saw service in both the navy and army between 1745 and 1750 and whose adventures were narrated in *The Female Soldier*—must rely on the “hacks” of their period, balladeers and pamphleteers writing for immediate public consumption, for the shape their stories would take. Their story sprang into the public imagination at a time when sensibilities were shifting away from the picaresque transvestite heroine who embodied “the trope of masquerading as a pastime and as a way of

conceptualizing identity”<sup>19</sup> to the ethos of female delicacy embodied in the sentimentality of the Richardsonian novel.

The contemporary accounts of their story—the anonymous pamphlet *The Tryals of Captain John Rackam, and Other Pyrates . . .* and Captain Charles Johnson’s *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*—faced with two cross-dressing heroines, assign each to a different model of womanhood. Mary is made to fit into the developing bourgeois ethos of the reluctant transvestite, able in love and war, who nonetheless aspires to a life of genteel virtue; Anne must, by way of contrast, embody the gritty despair and unheroic stance of one who has turned her back on chastity and opted for sexual titillation and “manly” savagery. Both renderings of womanhood, however, underscore how gendered identities—the various versions of maleness and femaleness open to these cross-dressing adventuresses—are self-generated rather than “natural,” based on perceptions and relationships and not inherent. In *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, Thomas Laqueur argues that the public’s understanding of gender and sexuality had undergone a profound change in the early eighteenth century, a period that corresponded to that of our heroines’ adventures: “An anatomy and physiology of incommensurability replaced a metaphysics of hierarchy in the representation of woman in relation to man . . . the female body came to be understood no longer as a lesser version of the male’s (a one-sex model) but as its incommensurable opposite (a two-sex model).”<sup>20</sup> This oppositional model of gendered identities, Catherine Craft-Fairchild argues in her turn, “depended for its stability upon the maintenance of a clearly visible line of demarcation between the roles of man and women; cross-dressing, in violating the boundaries between separate spheres, came increasingly to be perceived as a threat” (177). Bonny and Read, living in a world where gendered identity is increasingly constructed by means of external signs—clothing, stances, manners, voice—must manipulate what remains of flexibility in these perceptions to navigate the sea of possibilities that cross-dressing opens for them.

*The pirate queens before the judge*

*Each pleaded for her life.*

*“I am about to have a child;*

*I am a pirate’s wife.”*

—Jane Yolen, *The Ballad of the Pirate Queens*

Cross-dressing is as necessary to Bonny and Read’s negotiation of the limitations of their gender as the revelation of their “true” gender identity

is necessary to the resolution of their tales. Their hold on the popular imagination stems, after all, from the dramatic revelation of their femaleness during their trial, exemplified by the witnesses' references to "the largeness of their breasts" and their sensationalized announcement of their pregnancies. Beginning with Johnson's 1724 account, the disclosure of their gender identity through the exposure of their breasts becomes an essential plot device in any narrative of their adventures. This breast-revelation motif may have been suggested to Johnson and later chroniclers by the 1721 semi-official account of the trial, in which captives called as witnesses make much of having been led into a belief that the two fierce pirates were women by their possessing distinctly female breasts. This, coupled with their dramatic life-saving revelation of their being "quick with child," emphasized for the contemporary audience their gender-bound true constitution, which, measured against their quintessentially male activities, led to their overshadowing the till-then famous John Rackam in the popular imagination.

Their own "essential" womanhood—literally embodied in their breasts and pregnancies—is effectively counterpoised to a witness' accounts, as quoted in *The Tryals . . .*, of the prisoners at the bar as wearing "Mens Jackets and long Trouzers, and Handkerchiefs tied about their heads; and that each of them had a Mchet and a Pistol in their Hands, and cursed and swore at the men, to murder the Deponent." Their breasts and bellies—evidence of their purportedly true female nature—are also juxtaposed to, and serve to counter, their reported statements of a wanton cruelty and disregard for life of which only males should be capable. Mary, a witness reported, had replied to his asking whether she was not afraid of death by hanging (the usual punishment for a conviction for piracy), by saying that "she thought it no great hardship, for were it not for that, every cowardly fellow would turn Pirate, and so infest the seas that men of courage must starve."<sup>21</sup> Annie, receiving a visit from her lover John Rackam hours before he was executed, was said to have told him "that he was sorry to see him there, but if he had fought like a man, he need not have been hanged like a dog."<sup>22</sup>

The breast-revelation motif is particularly crucial to the telling of Read's tale. The story of her adulthood is traditionally centered around three episodes of intentional disclosure of her sex, two built upon her "suffer[ing] the discovery to be made, by carelessly showing her breasts, which were very white," to both the soldier in Flanders whom she would eventually marry and the pirates' captive by whom she is smitten and who will become the father of her unborn child.<sup>23</sup> (In John Abbott's 1874

account, for example, Mary, pretending to be asleep in the tent she shared with her "fair-faced, flaxen-haired" Flemish comrade, "allowed her drapery so to fall as partially to expose her fair and beautiful bosom."<sup>24</sup>) The third episode is the revelation in court of her gender and pregnancy. Subsequent writers have embellished Johnson's tale of a duel she fought with another pirate in her efforts to save her lover's life by expanding on this motif. In Johnson's version, Mary's lover, a captive turned reluctant pirate, found himself engaged to fight a duel with a fiercer and better-trained opponent. Fearful for her lover, Mary quarreled with the pirate and challenged him ashore two hours before the pending duel, where she fought him with sword and pistol and killed him upon the spot. To this, later writers have added two variations of the breast-revealing motif, the use of the breast emphasizing the underlying gist of the episode. In one, Mary, about to be slain by her opponent, tears open "her rough sailcloth shirt" and reveals her breasts. "For an instant only the pirate forgot his guard," Jamaican folklorist Clinton Black tells us, "forgot his peril as he stared in utter astonishment at what he saw. But that instant was his undoing."<sup>25</sup> In another, having vanquished him, she pulls aside her clothes, baring her breasts as she cries to his opponent, "You thought me a woman and struck me on the cheek. Well! It is in truth a woman to-day who kills you that she may teach others to respect her"<sup>26</sup> (see figure 3.4 below). Then she coolly proceeded to pull the trigger, blowing his head to pieces, thus juxtaposing feminine weakness and male deadly power.

Not surprisingly, episodes connected to the unveiling of their breasts—as the most salient feature, no pun intended, of their "true" gender identity—are most common in the numerous illustrations that have accompanied the various retellings of the tale. The earliest known illustration of Bonny and Read is that accompanying Charles Johnson's *A General History . . .* It approaches the depiction of gender through female attributes (long hair, an intimation of roundness of breasts, and slimness of waist) and a softness of pose (tilted heads, hands extending gracefully away from the body, demure glances that turn away from the artist/viewer) that counter the swords and hatchets waived, the wide trousers and background of pirate ships that are emblems of their piratical careers (see figure 3.1). It serves as the basis for two illustrations (see figures 3.2 and 3.3 below) that reproduce the same basic elements while claiming the viewer's attention to the open jackets and intimations of naked breasts.<sup>27</sup>

Likewise, the lithograph that accompanied Maurice Bresson's *The Scurge of the Indies: Buccaneers, Corsairs, and Filibusters* (1929), dramatizes,



The two women Pirates, Mary Read and Anne Bonney.

Figure 3.1. From Charles Johnson's *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates* (1724).

through the revelation of Mary's breasts at the conclusion of her duel, one of the central devices of this cross-dressing plot.<sup>28</sup> In turning the viewer's gaze to Mary's breast, the illustrator evokes the erotic component of her tale as the dominant message: the visual depiction of the naked breast intensifies the tension between Mary's male attire, violent gestures, and her victim lying prone and dying on the ground.

Margaret R. Miles, in "The Virgin's One Bare Breast: Female Nudity and Religious Meaning in Tuscan Early Renaissance Culture," underscores the power of the image of the naked breast (particularly the representation of the nursing Virgin) as signifying the "power to conceive, to nourish, shelter and sustain human life, a power that may well have been understood by . . . people threatened by famine, plague, and social chaos as 'the body's best show of power.'"<sup>29</sup> This power was seen, however, "as [one] that must be firmly directed to the socially desirable ends of a patriarchal society, that is, to keeping women 'in their place'"—the very message behind the duel depicted in the illustration, fought to preserve the life of the man Mary loved and with whom she hoped to fulfill her dream of domestic happiness. As in the representation of the Virgin's nurturing breast, the emphasis on Bonny and Read's breasts in the illustrations of their tales acts always as a visual reminder of how women "must be guided to accept the model



Mary Read

Figures 3.2 and 3.3. From Clinton Black's *Pirates of the West Indies* (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

of the nursing Virgin without identifying with her power—a power derived from her body, but ultimately a social as well as a physical power.”<sup>30</sup>

Most recently, In Jane Yolen’s *The Ballad of the Pirate Queens*, a book



Anne Bonny



*Mary Read blows out the brains of the sailor who had insulted her. (Lithograph of the romantic period.)*

Figure 3.4. An image from c. 1828 (described by Maurice Besson in *The Scourge of the West Indies* (Routledge & Sons, 1929) as a “Lithograph of the Romantic Period”).

intended for children, the nurturing power of the female body is depicted through David Shannon’s illustration of the defiant pirates flaunting their power to procreate, standing before the judge in profile, their breasts eclipsed by their protruding bellies—the judge’s disapproving stare and the crowd’s astonished gasps as a backdrop (see figure 3.5).<sup>31</sup> The illustration’s affirmation of Bonny and Read’s essential femaleness—doubly underscored by their breasts and bellies—returns us to Johnson’s contemporary account, in which the pirates’ dramatic plea of “their Bellies” propels them out of history into a multiplicity of fictions having at their core the tensions between true female identity and the freedom afforded by the assumption of male attire.

*Today's lessons were math and geography. In math we learned about angles. (You use them when aiming a canon.) In geography we learned where the West Indies are and how to read treasure maps.*

—Colin McNaughton, *Captain Abdul's Pirate School*

The sensation caused by the women's cross-dressing piratical career, as revealed after their apprehension and trial, must needs be seen in the context of England's efforts to eradicate piracy in the Caribbean. "Piracy is frequently (but far from always) against foreigners (and so has links with war); . . . [it] is often not committed randomly by individuals but is part of a complex structure of trade and territorial power."<sup>32</sup> The Golden Age of piracy, the period between 1650 and 1730, included the years of the Spanish War of Succession (1701-14), whose end left the soldiers from disbanded armies looking for ways to survive; piracy became one of the few job options. The surplus of labor at the end of the war had produced an immediate reduction in wages and greater competition for available seafaring jobs. It was followed by a slump in trade beginning in 1715, extending well into the 1730s. The extraordinary growth of commerce in the colonies before this slump had, however, "made it a tempting field for depredations of every kind, and the result [had been] that high-handed proceedings on the open sea [were] the rule rather than the exception"<sup>33</sup>; the slump intensified the competition and tempted pirates to move against those communities that had previously shown extreme leniency toward them. Pirates had been until then more often than not tolerated by otherwise law-abiding communities. Charleston, South Carolina, Anne Bonny's hometown, had been particularly notorious for its forbearance. Pirates of all sorts walked its streets with impunity; if arrested by the English authorities and brought to trial, juries rarely managed to return a negative verdict. The juries "were made of the people, and then, as now, public sentiment ruled, the law to the contrary notwithstanding."<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the Charleston authorities had sought the aid of the pirates in the colony's defense when under attack by the Spanish, as it had done in 1706. It was not until the pirates began to plunder the colonists themselves that stricter measures were enacted and hangings of pirates became more common. Governments shifted from tolerance or indifference to active suppression only when legitimate trade was disrupted. These efforts at suppression had peaked in 1720 following offers of general pardons to any pirate renouncing (his or her) profession. These pardons, however, offered in 1717 and 1718, had failed to rid the sea of pirate vessels, as acceptance of the pardon meant merely a return to the dismal eco-

nomie conditions from which pirates had sought to escape. Aware of their failure, English colonial authorities intensified their campaigns against piracy, with the result that probably 500 to 600 pirates were executed between 1716 and 1726,<sup>35</sup> among them Jack Rackam and most of his crew. Rackam's most grievous sin—for which he and his followers had to be made an example—was that of returning to piracy after having purportedly announced his renunciation of piratical activities.

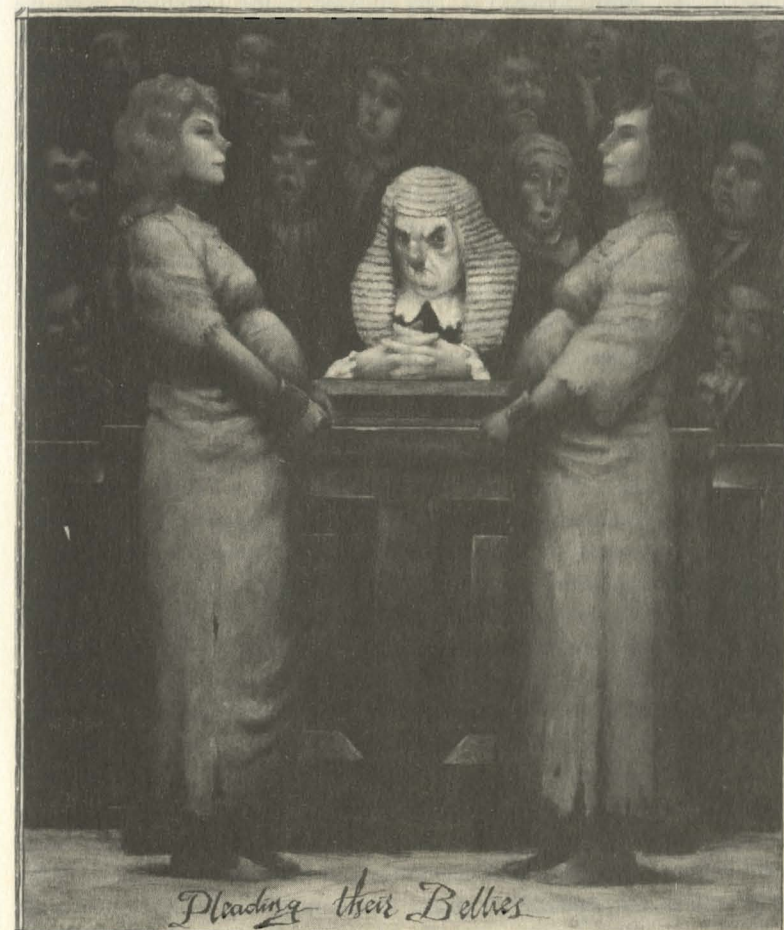


Figure 3.5. From Jane Yolen's *The Pirate Queens* (Harcourt Brace & Company, 1995). Illustrations by David Shannon.



Eradication efforts were centered primarily on the colony of New Providence in the Bahamas, one of the chief pirate headquarters. In January 1708 British merchants and planters had petitioned the British Crown to take the government of the Bahamas into their "immediate protection and government" in order to safeguard West Indian trade, which included at the time a profitable slave trade threatened by piracy—there had been too many incidents of pirates displaying their humanitarian feelings by giving chase to slave ships and freeing their cargo. The 1710s witnessed a struggle for control between settlers engaged in the extremely profitable production and shipping of cotton, wood, sugar, indigo, salt, tortoise shell, and whale oil, and the pirates who had made of the Bahamas their capital. Settlers complained of being forced into cooperation with the pirates and argued that "without good government and some strength" the Bahamian islands would always be a "shelter for pyrates."<sup>36</sup> Their successful attacks upon international commerce between 1716 and 1726 created what Marcus Rediker has called "an imperial crisis."<sup>37</sup> In 1717, many complained, Nassau "was in the hands of professionals," and as a result a year later the English Government sent a squadron to the Island of New Providence, led by Captain Woodes Rogers, offering a general pardon as a first step in turning the "pirates' nest" into a law-abiding colony.

The English government's struggle to seize and retain control of the islands, the conflict between lawful and piratical commerce, between the embryonic settler establishment and the anti-establishment pirate population against which Bonny and Read's stories play, is "embodied" in the many tales of their adventures that circulated after their trial, conviction, and escape from execution. Their tale became emblematic of the Bahamian struggle between lawfulness and lawlessness, between their "true" nature as domestically bound women needing to reveal their breasts, pleading their bellies, and their unnatural incarnation as bloodthirsty pirates. A trial of pirates, Julie Wheelwright has argued, was "an expression of the power of social leaders as well as of their needs: freedom to move goods without impediment; the acceptance of their values; freedom to expropriate wealth in whatever way they chose, supported by a flexible and acquiescent work force."<sup>38</sup> Bonny and Read's trial has to be seen as part of the "greatest wave of such trials." Their story, Mary Read's particularly, embodied the strife between the settler's Puritanical notions and the pirate's love of life, "for when ashore, they spent their nights in riotous living, drinking, dancing, and carousing."<sup>39</sup> Johnson insists on Mary Read's desire for domesticity, thus incarnating the central conflict of the Caribbean as a locus of Empire in the early decades of the eighteenth century. In her capacity for an

amorous passion leading into self-forgetfulness—she, for example, neglects her arms and accouterments, previously kept "in the best order," when she falls in love, following her loved one into danger "without being commanded," only to be near him—in her proving "very reserved and modest" as well as steadfast in her resisting an illicit liaison with her future husband, in her resolution to leave the life of piracy to live honestly with her new lover (a decision thwarted by her arrest and trial), in her being able to "plead her belly," she proves her true nature, thereby legitimizing for her contemporaries the economic and political battles being waged in the Caribbean. She was, after all, a pirate by accident, and fierce and determined as she was in the defense of her ship and crew, looked forward to a life of domesticity. Although she was a "daring pirate," as a nineteenth-century historian of piracy reminds us, "she was also a woman, and again she fell in love."<sup>40</sup> What better symbol for English aspirations for control and order in the region than this English young woman (she was then 28), who had patriotically fought for her country in Flanders before sailing to the Caribbean, and who yearned for domestic prosperity? The unveiling of her breasts (in Johnson's version) was always in the guise of a "confession" that would eventually lead to marriage and the possibility of assuming her true identity. Her story demonstrated that "the heroine's flight from domestic commitment was a temporary state"—she would ultimately contradict the rules under which she played.<sup>41</sup> Among the many apologies for Read's career as a pirate, the typical one reads thus:

[Mary] was vain and bold in her disposition, but susceptible of the tenderest emotions, and of the most melting affections. Her conduct was generally directed by virtuous principles, while at the same time, she was violent in her attachments. Though she was inadvertently drawn into that dishonorable mode of life which has stained her character, and given her a place among the criminals noticed in this work, yet she possessed a rectitude of principle and of conduct, far superior to many who have not been exposed to such temptations to swerve from the path of female virtue and honor.<sup>42</sup>

Anne, by contrast, was a pirate by choice, and in her tale contemporary audiences could read the need for the eradication of piracy. Of a fierce and courageous temper, she renounces the very life of domesticity that Mary craved—and that Anne enjoyed as the daughter of a prosperous South Carolina planter—in order to embrace a life of seafaring marauding. In most accounts of her adventures her link to Charleston, a city considered too embracing of piracy by Royal authorities, and her familiarity with the

many pirates who visited the city with impunity, are underscored as evidence of her wicked tendencies and deficient upbringing. Anne, a colonial—as she had not only been raised in America but was marked by an “American” rashness and impudence—was said to have killed an *English* servant maid in a passion with a case-knife. Johnson claims to have found this story groundless upon further inquiry, but added that she was so robust that once, “when a young fellow would have lain with her against her will, she beat him so that he lay ill of it for a considerable time.”<sup>43</sup> Her unfemale robustness, in this context, bears comparison with Mary’s more feminine physique, as exemplified by the whiteness of the latter’s breasts—particularly as Anne’s physical strength exemplifies the roughness of the colonial as against the comparative daintiness of her English counterpart. A later chronicler would describe her as a “desperado, as robust in person as she was masculine in character.”<sup>44</sup> Anne, an illegitimate child herself, growing up in a colonial culture not necessarily particular about legitimate unions and the strength of marital vows, had soon after her marriage found the means of “withdrawing her affection from her husband” and agreeing to elope with Rackam; further proof, in case we needed it, of the unmaidenly behavior and unnatural tendencies linked by writers of pamphlets and ballads to precisely those very elements of colonial licentiousness and piratical wickedness that it had become so necessary to eradicate. Anne’s unwomanly nature is further attested to in her abandoning in Cuba the first child she had conceived with Rackam—as if the Caribbean, as a region, facilitated the unnatural abandonment of newborn babes.

*When her snow-white breast in sight became,  
She prov'd to be a female frame,  
And Rebecca Young it was the name  
Of the Rambling Female Sailor . . .  
On the river Thames she was known full well,  
Few sailors could with her excel  
One tear let fall as the fate you tell,  
Of the Rambling Female Sailor.*

—“The Rambling Female Sailor” (1830).<sup>45</sup>

The play of concealment and unveiling of these pirates’ female bodies proved as fascinating to their contemporary readers in their literal and symbolic aspects as it would prove, encoded in new symbolic contexts, to later audiences, to which their tale has been presented to dramatize political and social ideals from Lockean liberalism to lesbian liberation. These

accounts—most of them twentieth-century novels, plays, and films—seek meaning in the juxtaposition of the protagonists’ femaleness against a “violent, ruthless enterprise, apparently drenched in masculinity” and linked to a particular geographic and historical space, notable for profanity, heavy drinking, and “thinly-veiled brutality and violence.”<sup>46</sup> Standing, so to speak, between anarchy and domesticity, they are ever-repeating symbols of riotous freedom.

Julie Wheelwright, in her essay “Tars, Tarts and Swashbucklers,” claims for Johnson’s *A General History of the Pyrates* the use of poetic license to mold the historical Bonny and Read into the figures of the “rapacious lady pirates who still appear in women’s fashion magazines and on screen today.”<sup>47</sup> In her view, Johnson’s central contribution to the reinvention of these questionable heroines is that of transforming them from “accepted members of the pirate crew into exceptional, bloodthirsty amazons.” His version, for better or worse, with all the inventions for which he claims historical veracity, remains the “official,” most accessible narrative, and is often quoted by most experts on piracy as fact. Johnson’s version of Bonny and Read as cross-dressing “desperadas” with a soft romantic side was reinforced in a popular London chapbook of 1755 dedicated to adventurous women, the anonymous *The Lives and Adventures of the German Princess, Mary Read, Ann Bonny, Joahn Philips, Madam Churchill, Betty Ireland and Ann Hereford*.

The Bonny and Read story received a variety of treatments throughout the nineteenth century. The anonymous author of *The Daring Exploits of Henry Morgan*, published in 1813, for example, embellishes Johnson’s version with an ambiguous account that appears to refer to Mary and Anne’s relationship as lesbian—during their trial Mary will argue in her defense that “she entered the service of the privateer purely upon the account of Anne Bonny, who was her lover.”<sup>48</sup> This unconventional assertion, however, is most explicitly contradicted by the rest of the text, which underscores Mary’s sexual virtue—“she had behaved very modestly among the men”—and argues that Mary had assumed her male disguise “to prevent her being ill used by seamen; and being taken in that disguise, she continued in it for fear of being worse used by the barbarous crew of the pirates.”<sup>49</sup> This is a view underscored in another nineteenth-century work, the anonymous *Les Aventures et l’héroïsme de Mary Read*, in which Mary, and her companion Anne, are depicted as “possessing a rectitude of conduct far superior to that of most women.”<sup>50</sup>

These nineteenth-century accounts of Bonny and Read as models of virtuous comportment are balanced by portraits that underscore their unnatural occupation and unwomanly sensuality. The anonymous *History*

of the *Lives and Bloody Exploits of the Most Noted Pirates . . .* (1855) portrays Anne as a spy with whom Jack Rackam develops "a criminal acquaintance," after which he became "very extravagant, and found it necessary, to avoid detection and punishment, to abscond with his mistress."<sup>51</sup> Of Mary, this account says not a word. A nineteenth-century French version—that found in P. Christian's *Histoire des marins, pirates et corsaires* (1846–1850)—underscores Mary's devotion to her would-be lover, but does it through the highlighting (with a vivid and revealing illustration) the moment in which, after defeating her lover's enemy in a duel, she displays her bosom to the dying man to let him know that he has just been defeated by a woman (see figure 3.5).<sup>52</sup>

These nineteenth-century versions of their adventures, however, have little to say about the Caribbean setting of their tales, other than as a background that makes their adventures as pirates possible. None of them purports to be anything other than a rewriting of Johnson's account with some harmless embellishments added for the interest of the reader. They reinterpret but do not recast the narrative provided by Johnson into new molds. Twentieth-century accounts, by contrast, provide seemingly endless reimaginings of Bonny and Read's piratical adventures, treating them as canvases on which authors can superimpose, with heavy doses of fiction, everything from feminist ideology to 1960s-style alternative societies.<sup>53</sup>

One of the earliest of these is Frank Shay's 1934 *Pirate Wench*,<sup>54</sup> a novel that builds an elaborate fiction around Mary as the de facto captain of her pirate vessel, a figure owing more to Hollywood corsair fabrications than to history. In his account, Anne emerges, not as a pirate, but as the weak and jealous lover of the dissolute Rackam and as such, Mary's enemy. Shay has frequent recourse in his text to allusions to the female body as emblematic of either English virtue or colonial licentiousness—assigning virtue, as it has become traditional, to the English Mary and lewdness to Anne and the many prostitutes of mixed race who inhabit the Caribbean space. He explains Read's incursion into piracy, for example, as stemming from her need to protect her body and virtue. Held prisoner by pirates, with other members of the crew of the ship to which she belonged, she refuses to join them until they order all prisoners to strip, whereupon a "blush crept to her cheeks and her heart sickened with a great fear as she began unbuttoning her jerkin" and she finally relents (49). Anne, by contrast, is not only an adulteress, but a rabidly jealous one who does not hesitate to attack Mary with a knife when she suspects Rackam of an interest in her or to denounce her as a woman before the crew, knowing full well that the arti-

cles state plainly that the first wench on board goes to the captain, but the second must be sent down to the men, forcing Read to defend her body and honor from them. Despite her virtue, the myth engendered by Mary Read's piratical career is that of an eroticized woman "dressed in the clothes of her sex, amorous, voluptuous and bedizened with gems," her hands bloodied, and "more rapacious than any man" (244).

In *Pirate Wench*, the Caribbean is identified with the space where domestic happiness is possible for the likes of a disenfranchised working-class young woman such as Read was:

What she wanted most of all was to go ashore and settle down and be a genuine housewife, taking care of husband and home and children if such there were. She might, she thought, like the Bahamas; she had heard the soil was fruitful and that there were no cold foul winters as in England. Too, land was cheap in addition to being fertile. She had over a hundred guineas in prize money and more was due her on the sales to be made in port. (77)

Read's first glimpse of the Caribbean, however, conjures up imperial notions of disdain for the "valueless" small islands of "rank and riotous verdure" that dot the West Indian seascape, and an identification with the conquerors who, like her, preferred "controlled loveliness." The social landscape of the Caribbean is invoked, ironically, through the sexuality of those non-English women whose bodies, unlike Read's, are available to the crewmen panting to go ashore, thus underscoring colonial notions of relative human (and womanly) value through the reference to "conquest":

She listened to the ribald jests of her fellows as they told each other of their previous conquests ashore and talked of rum and women, two of life's elements that were seemingly inseparable in their minds. There was a yellow girl here, she heard, a Spaniard there; all about her were men who declared that only black women knew the art of love, that the darker the meat the richer the quality; still others desired the fire of the Frenchwomen. [Read's] problem was not theirs. (83)

Conqueror-like, Read will establish a settlement, organized around the labor of African captives rescued from a slaver, through which she intends to create a sort of colonial utopia, with a form of government, specific tasks for all, and protection for the slave women from the advances of the whites. To this settlement, which resulted from her unconscious impulse for a home and children, she intended to enlist white women and mer-

chants so as to turn it into a substantial colony of which she would be as much a mistress as she was of her vessel. Torn between her desire for home and domesticity and her habit of power, at a pivotal moment in the text Mary stands atop the high hill behind her settlement, surveying her domain, momentarily forgetting her desire for power before the vista of natural beauty before her, ironically unaware that her very proprietary surveying of the landscape is the gesture of imperial domination. From the vantage point of the hill, however, she will glimpse the British ship whose taking will be her undoing, as her success in capturing it unleashed against her the force of true and legitimate imperial power that will dismantle her unlawful settlement.

Shay's *Pirate Wench* is grounded on a detailed historical background that anchors Read's story in the British government's efforts to eradicate piracy. Read herself takes her place in the text as the ambivalent incarnation of these efforts, a character whose deficiencies as a pirate—stemming from her own ingrained desire for domesticity and control, for “settling” herself and others—leads her to collude with the forces of Empire who are destroying piracy and the freedom it represents. As she is seduced into dreams of being a lady through her love affair with the governor's son, her settlement—formed from “the human flotsam and jetsam that drifted hither and yon”—begins to shape itself architecturally along class lines: “The single street, at the head of which the wench had built her own house, was now crowded with various types of buildings, from those built with timber from captured prizes to the thatched huts of the negroes” (293). The ultimate irony, in Shay's interpretation, is that while Mary is tortured and condemned to hang, she must endure her ordeal with the knowledge that her erstwhile lover—“as piratical and vengeful a man as any she had met in her short life”—had been saved from torture and the gallows through the influence of his high-born family, and had claimed one half of her ship's treasure. He would go on—although death would spare her the knowledge of this—to lead the expedition that would raze her settlement at Grand Caicos. Mary Read's final victory, a hollow one at that, is that of relinquishing the expensive silk and brocade garments in which she had wished to die, in favor of her coarse sailcloth shirt, cotton hose, and rough boots: “I had thought to die as a woman but better judgement prevailed and I die as I lived” (329).

The Caribbean is but a barely-glimpsed promised land, offering possible riches and freedom, in *Mary Read: A Play in Three Acts* by James Bridie and Claud Gurney, produced for the first time in 1934, the same year that Shay's *Pirate Wench* was published.<sup>55</sup> The work, which follows Mary's story

from her adolescence—when her mother successfully passes her off as her dead son—to her death after childbirth in Jamaica, adds to the familiar elements of her tale her romantic involvement with a painter and fellow soldier in Flanders who abandons her after their marriage and resurfaces in the West Indies as a spy of the government of the Bahamas in its efforts to apprehend Jack Rackam. The thematic focus of the play is Mary's ambivalent feelings about her gender, her discomfort with the sex and the limitations placed upon women, and the failure of every attempt she made to embrace her womanhood.

In Bridie's characterization of Mary Read, which supplements Johnson's contemporary account, her being “a bold, manly sort of wench” and her fierce and fearless temperament become the focus of her struggles to conform to the demands of womanhood (2). The text makes much of her courage and competence as a soldier and of her adherence to strict principles of honor and loyalty, even if these principles ultimately fall outside the law. Asked by the chaplain as she lays dying of fever if she is sorry for the life she led, her reply summarizes her peculiar code of honor:

No, I'm not sorry, I've led a gallant life. I've killed men, but always in fair fight and I've shown mercy to my prisoners. I've never robbed the poor nor wheedled the rich. I've never sold my soul for money or ease. I've never turned my back upon friend or foe. I've no woman's tricks, but I've no alderman's tricks either. I've never let cowardice stop me from doing anything under God's heaven. And I'll not go out of this life cringing to you nor to any man. (98)

Anne Bonny plays a very minor role in Bridie's *Mary Read*, serving primarily as a contrasting image of sensual womanhood placed against Mary's manly plainness. Described in the text as “a bundle of flaming sin,” she stands in sharp contrast against a Mary who finally loses her virginity the night before Rackam's ship is ambushed. She is Mary's match in courage and daring and is endowed with a sense of humor that allows her to befriend the sterner Mary. She has, after all, also left her Virginia plantation home in search of freedom from the confines of genteel womanhood: “I had my fill of fine gentlemen in the sugar plantations, with their ‘Pray Ma'ams’ and their ‘Oh Ma'ams’ and their ‘Madam, your obedients.’ They can't ask a girl for what they want without wimpering and play-acting. And then along came Calico Jack like a great roaring stallion. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven” (76).

Flights of erotic fancy, however, are not a part of Mary's quest. If Eng-

land, Flanders, and the army prove to be less than ideal spaces for her search for freedom from the confines of an understanding of womanhood for which she is ill-suited, the Caribbean emerges as the place of escape, idealized as “a dream of purple mountains and dark trailing jungles” (47). Her lover lures her toward the Indies as a place where she could “wrap petticoats round your legs” and leave behind a life of soldiering and pirateering. Pernambuco, he tells her, is a fine town “with broad tiled pavements, and great avenues of tall cocconut trees” where “the sun shines all day long” and they dig out “dark, copper-coloured gold, and mint it into moidores” (47). But the Caribbean space toward which she entices her is rapidly becoming a space that no longer tolerates freedom and lawlessness, a space preparing for an assault on unconventionality and permissiveness in the name of Empire. The third act of *Mary Read* is plotted against the Government’s proclamation of full-scale war against piracy. The governor of the Bahamas, commenting on the state of the colony, summarizes the official view of the situation: “I am here in the midst of a nest of cutthroats and expected to subdue them by proclamations. The island is packed to the foreshore with pirates, waiting till I drop an eyelid to disembowel me and every honest man-jack in the fort” (66). Bridie recognizes, and elaborates dramatically in his play, the startling historical coincidence of Bonny and Read’s piratical adventure as unfolding against the canvas of Captain Woodes Rogers’s arrival in New Providence bearing the official Royal pardon that would do so much to end piracy and establish firm colonial control over the Caribbean region.

*Marie Read, femme pirate* (1952) by Michel Candie<sup>56</sup> takes a novel approach to the retelling of the story of Read and Bonny by presenting the text as purportedly fragments of a journal drafted by Read herself.<sup>57</sup> Written in French, the tale that emerges from this pseudo-autobiographical narrative reflects Candie’s protofeminist concerns, presented here through Marie’s ambivalences about gender roles and reluctance to succumb to what her age considered appropriate womanly pursuits, a portrait that goes against the grain of the familiar characterization of Mary as the most gender-bound of the two female pirates. Candie, in her retelling of Read and Bonny’s tale, posits Marie’s wavering between land and sea, femininity and masculinity, piracy and domesticity, as a paradigm of the contemporary female quandary. Her adventurous, masculine impulse always propels her toward vast spaces and openness; her yearning to share the joys of home and family becomes a catalyst toward confinement and death. “There is

always a part of me which remains unavowable in my relationships with people who live on dry land. I can only find complete rapport with Anne Bonny,” she claims (138). Standing as she is between one option and the other, she is never truly whole. Unable, like Anne Bonny, to be both mother and pirate, she ultimately wills herself to die.

Marie’s relationship with Anne Bonny—the bond of friendship between them—is at the center of Marie’s dilemma. As daring pirates they are unique and alone, only able to rely completely on one another. As women, they have followed opposite paths; while Anne has exploited her femininity and sexuality, giving full rein to both sides of her nature, Marie has repressed her sexuality, not trusting to the ambivalence of her vacillating bisexuality. Torn between manifold attractions of the comradeship of her fellow pirates and the comforting but ultimately treacherous sisterhood of the upper-class, empire-bound women among whom she is sent as a spy, she ultimately gives herself to Christian, a captive of the pirates with whose plight she identifies, only to discover to her bewilderment that she has surrendered to Guillaume de Rieuze and that the father of her unborn child is an aristocratic spy working with the enemies of piracy and the husband of her erstwhile friend Catherine de Rieuze. The betrayal, which she sees as a self-betrayal, as a failure of her divided self to act in concert and wholeness, leaves her unable to face life again:

Before dying, I would like to pinpoint the breach through which my virtue drained away; there was but a fleeting instant in which I lowered my guard: the moment when I met Catherine in Manzanillo. Why couldn’t I understand that she would become my unrelenting enemy? I loved that flawless face, the apparent rigor of her life. I relished the time I spent in her house. I came to find it natural to drink my coffee out of jade cups. Or maybe Corner was right: jade was not made to assuage our thirst. And then, afterwards, there was Guillaume. Those are the two poles between which my fate shipwrecked, and it is only now when I’m so close to the end, that I realize that only one face fills my heart: Anne’s. She’s the only one to whom my death will seem a betrayal, the only one who’ll be unable to forgive me for its being voluntary, the only one who’ll continue to love me even if she won’t forgive me . . . (293)

Marie’s quandary is the product of ethical principles challenged by her incursions into soldiering and piracy. Her behavior had been guided by the mentorship of the tutor her grandmother had provided for her after her mother had passed her off as a boy. Educated in the ways and principles of

an English gentleman, she must translate the code of honor and rules of behavior of English middle- and upper-class manhood into the more disreputable environments into which her cross-dressing experiences propel her. Pitted against the decimation of the war in Flanders and the betrayal and savagery of the political and economic tensions of the early-eighteenth-century Caribbean, these principles betray their emptiness and irrelevance, their need to be replaced by a different system of values whose chimerical impossibility Marie must ultimately accept.

These new values are embodied in the romantic notion of a pirates' Utopia, the *Republique des Frères de la Côte* (the Republic of the Brethren of the Coast), a democratic nation built on the cooperative principles of the pirate community, one that would not recognize differences in class, race, and gender. The pirates' community is, in Candie's rendition and despite its obvious shortcomings, a society predicated on purity of principle, comradeship, and honor. The forces of government, on the other hand, rely on betrayal, seduction, and dishonor to accomplish their goal of territorial and political expansion. Marie's tragic destiny will hinge on the outcome of this unequal struggle between an outmatched Brotherhood and the combined force of the European powers, which can agree on nothing but their destruction.

*Marie Read, femme pirate* is rare among accounts of piracy in its explicit and detailed discussions of the issue of slavery from an abolitionist standpoint. Guided by Père Antoine in his role as her new mentor in West Indian social issues, Marie is instructed in the realities of plantation life through his tales of savage plantation masters and brutalized runaway slaves. Having heard from the highly placed wives of English noblemen and diplomats among whom she dwelled as a spy of the atrocities committed by the Jamaican Maroons against planters—one plantation had been "attacked by a horde of black demons, the crops set on fire, the [planter's] wife and children massacred" (114)—Père Antoine must offer the Maroons' side of the tale. The men of Nauny (Nannytown) have indeed become "ferocious beasts," the priest will admit, but only after enduring the sort of barbarous treatment that leads men to "disregard pity" (115).<sup>58</sup> A runaway slave who has found his way to Père Antoine's house had fled from a planter who fed his slaves nothing but rotten salted herring and who, having caught him out hunting for better food, had accused him of theft and "lashed him mercilessly." Having fled the plantation, he had made his way to Nauny, but only after having been pursued by a pack of dogs that had "torn up his calves and thighs" (116). Tales such as these have led Père Antoine to conclude that the slaves "had been well schooled" in pitilessness by their masters.

In Candie's somewhat sentimental presentation of the erotic elements of piracy, elusive visions of domestic bliss (such as Anne's bittersweet contemplation of the portrait of the young baby girl she had given birth to in Cuba and left in the care of relatives of Rackam in Jamaica) are countered by descriptions of wife-battering and rape. While in Cuba, Marie learns of a young married woman who is frequently battered by a husband to whom she is devoted but who cannot forget her admission of having been raped by the captain of the pirate ship who had attacked the boat in which she was returning to Cuba from Spain. Her husband "was convinced that a woman can never forget the man who has taken her virginity," a claim that is gleefully mocked by Marie's aristocratic companions, who claim that their wedding nights were best forgotten (128).

Candie exploits the complexities of the eighteenth-century Caribbean space as the dramatic backdrop against which she can portray twentieth-century feminist concerns and rapidly developing anticolonial thought. Her Caribbean is a space for enlightening Marie Read about the forces of oppression—patriarchal, colonial, racial, of class and social hierarchy—that shaped her life in England and Flanders and thwart her ambition for freedom and economic self-sufficiency at sea. Her relationship with the aristocratic Catherine de Rieuze, instrumental as it is in opening new vistas for social understanding, is also a perfect vehicle for Candie to explore a complex approach to feminism that takes into account class differences. For Marie Read, child of the London underclass, cannot find true sisterhood in an aristocratic companion who vows friendship only to become her bitterest enemy when their notions of political action diverge. It is ultimately Marie's realization that her life has played itself against seemingly insurmountable class-bound obstacles at home that pursue her relentlessly in the "frontier" space in which she hoped to escape that leads Marie to seek her death. Knowing they are behind her in fast pursuit, she wills herself to die.

Steve Gooch's *The Women Pirates Ann Bonney and Mary Read*, a play first produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Aldwych Theatre in London in July 1978, seeks to place the Caribbean region as the centerpiece of the drama.<sup>59</sup> The work is technically and thematically an ambitious dramatic undertaking, intent on conveying the "broad panorama" spanned by Read and Bonny's lives through the techniques of the alternative theater and its expectations of a more active and engaged relationship to its audience. Gooch relies on a chorus of singers to offer the broader outlines of their complex story while structuring his scenes to highlight the salient points of the familiar story.

Gooch's reading of Read and Bonny's story is eminently political: he sees them as pursuing their "personal odysseys" in those very sites "where the European empire-builders of the eighteenth century were clashing: Ireland, Flanders, Carolina, the Caribbean" (iii). The broad geographical spaces in which their adventures unfold "reproduced the economic links and political hot-spots of their age" (iii). In Gooch's interpretation, the two women emerge as casualties not only of the restrictions imposed on women in their societies, but of "the development of English imperialism itself." When forced to leave Flanders after the war has ended and after her Flemish husband has been brutally murdered for having married an English-woman, Mary equates her fate to that of the devastated continent she is leaving behind: "If I stay now, I'll finish up like him. Battered and flattened like this whole continent. What's left is alive with maggots and fit only for the vultures in London and Paris" (28).

Gooch's Caribbean—particularly the pirate community of Nassau—is depicted as an "alternative society" of "anti-colonial rebels" that had the potential for becoming the site of a sort of piratical Utopia. One of the scenes of the play finds the pirates discussing the possibility of creating their own kingdom:

We could build an empire here if we pulled together. Rome itself was started by sheep thieves and runaway slaves. Force is the key, and force we have. If we took the Indians, the labourers and settlers under our wing, we could make slaves of those who don't recognize our sovereignty. Declare ourselves a legal monarchy and every court in Europe would recognize us. They'd even send ambassadors! (38)

Gooch sees this pirate community—in which Read and Bonny can claim a role despite its intrinsic sexism—as engaged in a struggle to develop a new way of life; he sees the pirates themselves as community builders, "potential law-makers as well as law-breakers" (iii). They may have terrorized the settlers throughout the Caribbean and the Atlantic coast and interfered with legitimate trade, but they recognize their role as a force of resistance to the pressures of Empire. The last reckless voyage of Rackam and his crew is seen as a "desperate rearguard action, / a last defensive ploy, / Against a growing empire" (40). As the chorus concludes after Rackam's defeat becomes the symbolic representation of the end of piracy in the region, "We turn away, look for a new world, / and turn our back upon the old. / But all the time it's there behind us, / It pulls us back into the fold" (57). But their efforts are linked thematically—despite their failure—

to the origins, experiments, and weaknesses of comparable alternative movements in Europe and the United States in the 1960s (iv).

*The Women Pirates Ann Bonney and Mary Read* deals less successfully with the gender issues posed by Read and Bonny's story. Like many chroniclers before him, Gooch relies on the breast-revelation motif for those instances in the plot when Mary must reveal her female identity. One such scene finds Mary opening her coat to flash her breasts at a doubting comrade; another finds Rackam's crew, upon being told that Mary is a woman, crying "Show us yer tits, Readie!" (55). On the subject of motherhood, Gooch borders on the trite, as in the lines given to Bonny when she announces their pregnancies to the judge after they have been found guilty and sentenced to death: "Our only defence: motherhood. We've been chased from pillar to post, didn't fit in here, didn't fit in there. But we did find one place for ourselves. As mothers. You can't hang innocent life" (72). The chorus that closes the narrative is equally banal on the subject of the women's bittersweet triumph over the forces of empire: "So the case was stitched up tight / And England's growth was still called free. / But Law had been made impotent / By the pirates' potency" (73).

Piratical potency is at the core of John Carlova's *Mistress of the Sea*,<sup>60</sup> purportedly a biography of Anne Bonny based on extensive research but with no sources credited in the text, which bears mentioning in our context, not for its literary quality—which is at best questionable—but for the way it reiterates the many uses of the story outlined above. Having read all available interpretations of the Bonny and Read tale, Carlova weaves them together in a narrative hodgepodge of sorts to which he adds some interesting variations of his own. He sees his central character as a protofeminist figure who anticipated "her emancipated sisters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by donning trousers and demanding the prerogatives that go with the pants" (11). But he also trivializes this female emancipation by speaking of her "voluptuous charms and cheerfully predatory nature" as worthy of "the gustier queens of Hollywood, Capri pants and all" (11).

*Mistress of the Sea* is a text intended for a popular audience, and as thus should not be taken to task for any unscholarly sensationalizations of which it may be guilty. The author's interweavings of narrative elements going back to Johnson's tale, however, seen here in their cumulative force, underscore the original story's malleability. Carlova, for example, returns with gusto to the breast-revelation motif as a means of eroticizing his character and her lewd pirate environment. "The bust," he explains, "in those days even as now, was considered of paramount importance in measuring

a woman's glory"; and he claims for Anne a well-founded pride in her assets, which she herself proudly described "as milky white and of the size and strength of melons" (28). At "The House of the Lords," the New Providence tavern and pirates' haven, the corps of barmaids, "formidable females" and "heartly wenches," "took only token swats at the pirates who grabbed their precarious bodices, which needed only slight disarrangement to reveal the unabashed flesh beneath," with the result that after a while "all the flushed and busy barmaids were bustling about with breasts exposed and animated" (51). These passages—their racy vulgarity notwithstanding—are indicative of how variations of Anne Bonny's tale are driven by the erotic impulse.

Unlike those novels and plays that follow Mary Read's story—and that focus on the tensions between a piratical career and the yearning for domesticity, and as thus play directly into the stresses between piracy and colonial control—narratives based on Bonny's tale fit more narrowly into the picaresque tradition of the lewd cross-dressing heroine who uses her charms and willingness to engage in sexual activity as the means to propel her adventures. As such, Bonny is a less complex character. She is a more straightforwardly female figure, her story not as dependent on cross-dressing, her desires less torn between adventure and domesticity. Consequently, works like Carlova's, or Anne Gartner's *Anne Bonny* (1977), must depend for their narrative tension on a linear narrative peppered with erotic encounters as salient points. Gartner's, for example, offers one such episode per chapter, as Annie has heated affairs with many of the most vicious pirates of the day: her "torrid affair" with pirate Benjamin Hornigold she describes as "my downfall" (32); she delights in her erotic encounter with Stede Bonnet and seeks the young sailor Mark Read (Mary in her male attire) "as a bitch in heat." Likewise, Alison York's erotic romance, *The Fire and the Rope* (1979),<sup>61</sup> is dependent on erotic encounters to propel the plot. It follows Anne's adventures as reluctant spy after her release from prison as a series of somewhat masochistic sexual encounters from which she finally finds escape in the arms of a highwayman turned political rebel. Anne Osborne's *Wind from the Main* (1972) and *Sea Star: The Private Life of Anne Bonny, Pirate Queen* by Pamela Jekel (1983) follow similar narrative patterns in relating Anne's adventures.<sup>62</sup> *Wind from the Main*, like Gartner's *Anne Bonny*, Jekel's *Sea Star*, and Jacques Tourneur's film, *Anne of the Indies*, rely on the figure of a doctor (a character present in many other retellings of Anne's story) as the lover who ultimately saves her from the gallows (and from a life of sexual promiscuity) and brings her into the realms of domesticity for which Mary Read craved.

In Carlova's text, erotic encounters take center stage, and although the text purports to be the means of examining the 2,000-strong pirate republic of the Bahamas in the early part of the eighteenth century as a kind of idealistic community, sexual activity becomes paramount as the way of articulating these questionable republican ideals. Carlova, not content with depicting the Republic of the Brethren of the Coast as an orgiastic den of iniquity, uses homosexuality as an example of the "less healthy aspects of sex" that were ultimately to undermine the dream of a piratical utopia:

Homosexuality was particularly rife among the pirates—as indeed it was among many seagoing men of those days—and some of the shipboard lovers had brought their rugged affections ashore. The most muscular and hairy brutes were hugging and slobbering over each other.

The oil lamps flicker fitfully, and huge torches were lighted to supplement them. In this garish, leaping red light, the scene looked like a sideshow in hell. The scarred, battered faces of the pirates and their paramours, many devoid of eyes or teeth or even a nose, seemed symbols of evil. (53-54)

*Mistress of the Sea*, in its dubious rendition of homosexuality, features a flamboyant homosexual character, Pierre (more a parody of stereotypical gay exuberance than a realistic portrayal), who organizes a piratical raid on a ship loaded with precious fabrics. It also brands Rackam as an effeminate, potentially closeted homosexual as a way of preparing the reader for Annie's abandonment of him in favor of a more manly rival. Rackam is portrayed as a "handsome lad" who had, after joining the navy, become "a great favorite with homosexual ships' officers" (97). This had led to "a sexual detour, which later made Rackam's frantic heterosexuality suspect"; Rackam, the texts suggests, "may have taken to chasing skirts mainly to prove to himself he was really a man" (97). As further proof of his questionable manhood, Carlova argues that Rackam had a habit of "dousing himself with scent and spending hours trimming his hair and moustache [which] didn't exactly make him a man's man, either" (98).

In Carlova's text, erotic abandon—heterosexual as well as homosexual—does not prove to be a liberating force. Bonny will have to learn, if she is to achieve happiness, that Mary Read's dreams of domesticity are ultimately more conducive to contentment than the quest for fleeting erotic fulfillment. Thus the final pages of the text will find Anne, in the company of her chivalrous surgeon and child, leaving Norfolk in search of new frontiers in the American West. Carlova's text, for all its proclaimed intentions



of depicting Anne as an example of the feminist heroine, reverts to traditional patriarchal notions of sexuality and domestic fulfillment in its conclusion—his reading of erotic abandon as evil and his condemnation of homosexuality being elements that justify his conclusions.

By contrast, Erica Jong's feminist erotic novel, *Fanny: Being the True History of the Adventures of Fanny Hackabout-Jones*,<sup>63</sup> a picaresque tale that narrates the sexual odyssey of its heroine across the seventeenth century's social landscape, finds in the figure of the female pirate a wondrous combination of gender attributes: as a pirate, Fanny fancies herself "neither Man nor Woman but a Combination of the noblest Qualities of the twain!" (428). Life at sea is depicted in *Fanny* as the essence of freedom: "my Spirit seem'd to soar at Sea. Each Night brought rapturous Dreams as I was rockt in the Cradle of the Deep, and I came to love the Water lapping at the Hull, the Gentleness of Sleep at Sea, and all the Sounds of Wind Thro' the Sails" (428). Fanny's encounter with Anne Bonny is but a brief passage in what is an extensive text covering a broad geographical canvas, but it is a pivotal one that comes near the end of the text and helps direct Fanny toward her own fulfillment.

The details of Bonny's story, as told to Fanny by Anne herself, follows Johnson's account almost to the letter, and bores Fanny to distraction. Anne's tale is told against Fanny's disparaging criticism, which underscores that the interest of a story is to be found, not in "Fidelity to fact alone" but in "Craft and Art" that can "stir the Blood" (441). Anne, however, accompanies her narrative with a slow and deliberate undressing that turns into an erotic dance and that eventually claims even Fanny's rapt attention. The scene leads to a riotous bisexual orgy that yields truly emancipating results:

In the Debauch that follow'd, our own Annie was the Alpha and Omega of our Pleasure. We three scarce attended to our own Wants, but all to her Insatiable Appetites. Both Men had her, then did I almost devour her from her toes to her red Curls; then did she devour me! O what a clever Tongue our Annie had! Words she fuml'd with, but Flesh flow'd for her as smoothly as a Springtime River. She could play the Man better than any Man, and the Key of her Tongue unlockt my Lock of Love that had ne'er been unlockt before! (445)

Fanny's erotic engagement with Anne Bonny allows Jong to address the concerns of female fetishism that were so prominent in feminist debate in the early 1980s. One reiterated motif in the chapter that narrates Fanny's encounter with Bonny is Anne's ability to make the penis unnecessary to

sexual fulfillment. Anne's touch has a lightness "which more excites the female Blood than the heavy grappling most Men proffer," and brings Fanny to the "Ultimate Conclusion of Love's Pleasure" by "teazing, tickling, pressing, squeezing, licking" (446). Naomi Schor, borrowing from Sarah Kofman's *L'enigme de la femme*, argues that "by appropriating the fetishist's oscillation between denial and recognition of castration, women can effectively counter any move to reduce their bisexuality to a single one of its poles."<sup>64</sup> Female fetishism is thus not a perversion, but "rather a strategy designed to turn the so-called 'riddle of femininity' to women's account."<sup>65</sup> Elizabeth Berg, arguing for the political benefits to be derived from this strategy, sees Kofman's work as providing a "theoretical framework for reconciling two tendencies of feminism which have tended to remain in apparently irremediable contradiction: the claim for equal rights and the claim for acknowledgment of sexual difference."<sup>66</sup> The strategy, in its political dimension, provides a link between erotic fulfillment as a liberating force, as it emerges in *Fanny*, and the quest for a resolution of Bonny and Read's existential quandary.

The Anne Bonny of *Fanny* has survived her brush with potential execution and sails the sea with the daughters she is training as pirates, finding erotic pleasure as it comes while retaining full personal and financial autonomy—she is altogether queen of her domain. Fanny, who had felt torn between "the Lady and the Pyrate," as if "two people battl'd for Supremacy within my very Soul," finds in her passionate awakening in Anne's hands a revelation about true freedom (452):

Perhaps I had resented Bonny because she alone of all the Women I had met had gain'd what we all seek: true Mastery o'er her Fate. She depended upon no keeper, whether male or female. She rais'd her own Babes and commanded her own Ship; and a Host of Pyrates listen'd when she spoke! If Women could master their Fates only thro' Pyracry sobeit! (453)

Fanny's fate, which brings her back to England as heiress to a grand estate and the financial autonomy and social position she coveted, rewrites Anne Bonny and Mary Read's tale, moving it from its historical tragic ending in prison awaiting the gallows—where historical documentation leaves them suspended—and inscribing it (and by extension, them) into the triumphant picaresque, a narrative of upward social mobility and moral rehabilitation. This return of the narrative to its original generic source—rendered through Jong's reinvention of the seventeenth-century picaresque

as a feminist narrative that seeks success through female autonomy and true erotic liberation—vindicates Bonny and Read as cross-dressing heroines who serve as mentors for younger “pyrates” bent on seeking, like the Wife of Bath, whom Fanny quotes as an earlier mentor, “absolute Command/ With all the Government of House and Land;/ And Empire o’er his Tongue, and o’er his Hand!” (453).

“Command,” “Government of House and Land,” “Empire”—how apt the words of the Wife of Bath are as guidance through the maze of tales engendered by Bonny and Read’s historical adventures, for they (the adventures and the women), in their relationship to the Caribbean, must be seen as emblematic of the Lockean imperative of full exploitation of land and territories for which “command,” “government of house and land,” and a full-blown empire are prerequisites. Bonny and Read, women seeking to assert their freedom from male command, government, and fledgling Empire, can never escape their symbolic potential as emblems for a region on which England will test its might as protoimperial nation and finesse its protocolonial institutions.

Yet the most engrossing aspect of Bonny and Read’s tale, as told by Johnson and subsequent writers—whether the heroines’ careers are seen as emblematic of historical social, political, gender, or feminist quandaries—continues to be their transgression of the lines separating men from women, as exemplified in their male attire. As Fanny learns when meeting Anne Bonny, “Ah, Men claim to be afraid of Women of Spirit, Women who can duel with Rapier like any Man, but i’faith, such Women fascinate ‘em!” (435). Bonny and Read’s cross-dressing—the tension between their male exterior and their “true” female natures—made them fascinating to generations of readers and writers, like malleable gender-bending figures on whose shoulders could rest a multiplicity of meanings. Their cross-dressing was a denial of the imperial and patriarchal imperative that must forever attempt to reduce them to that “floating breast” of which José Piedra writes in “Itinerant Prophetesses of Transatlantic Discourse”—“this prophetic woman reduced to a heaven-pointing nipple, which carved on the northern Caribbean coasts of South America, inspires the voyager to reshape the globe, and thus his own reading of a destiny which is—and should definitely remain—in his hands.”<sup>67</sup> Bonny and Read’s quandary is that of historical figures suspended between truth and fiction, femaleness and maleness, piracy and the law. As nonwriting travelers, their only testimony was that written on their body—the only words that can be fully attributed to them, without help from writers and pamphleteers are “Milord, we plead our bellies,” a testimony that has left them forever sus-

pended between notions of womanhood. The concealment and revelation of breasts that forms such a central element in the various retelling of their adventures points to a gender-bound “truth” that they struggled to refine and control through cross-dressing in those geographical margins of Empire in which such freedom still seemed possible. And cross-dressed they had passed into history, vehicles for neverending tales of the struggle between reality and illusion, female potential and the patriarchy, the freedom of the frontier and the command and government of Empire, forever hovering between “the devil and the deep blue sea.”

#### NOTES

1. Bonny and Read are not the only women pirates on record as having sailed the Caribbean. Edward Rowe Snow, in *True Tales of Pirates and Their Gold* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1953), includes the story, which he purports to be true, of “Fanny Campbell, Who Loved and Won,” a young woman from Massachusetts who in 1773, in an effort to rescue her fiancé, mistakenly held in a Cuban prison on suspicion of piracy, became the captain of a pirate ship.
2. Johnson most definitely had access to the report on the trial of Rackam and his crew published by a Jamaican printer named Robert Baldwin soon after the proceedings. The records of the Vice-Admiralty at Saint Iago de la Vega are now lost, but the Baldwin pamphlet had been sent to the Council for Trade in England in lieu of the official trial report by the governor of Jamaica, who had presided over the Court, attesting to its authenticity.
3. *The Tryals of Captain John Rackam and Other Pyrates . . .*, (CO 137/14f. 9, Public Records Office, London).
4. Captain Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*, edited by Arthur L. Hayward (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1927).
5. Miriam Williford, “Lost Women: Mary Read and Anne Bonney.” Paper presented at the Ninth Annual History Conference at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados, 4–7 April 1997.
6. Marcus Rediker, “When Women Pirates Sailed the Seas.” *The Wilson Quarterly* 17:4 (1993): 103.
7. Rediker, 103–104.
8. Jo Stanley, *Bold in Her Breeches: Women Pirates Across the Ages* (London: Pandora, 1995), 147.
9. Quoted in Clinton V. Black, *Pirates of the West Indies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 101.
10. Dianne Dugaw, “‘Rambling Female Sailors’: The Rise and Fall of the Seafaring Heroine.” *International Journal of Maritime History* 4:1 (June 1992): 180.

11. Patrick Pringle, *Jolly Roger: The Story of the Great Age of Piracy* (New York: Norton and Company, 1953), 221.
12. Anonymous (often attributed to Daniel Defoe), *The Life and Adventures of Mrs. Christian Davies, Commonly Called Mother Ross; Who, In Several Campaigns Under King William and the Late Duke of Malborough, in the Quality of a Foot-Soldier and Dragoon, Gave Many Signal Proofs of an Unparalleled Courage and Personal Bravery* (London: C. Welch, 1740).
13. Mary Astell, writing in 1724 in her preface to the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, published posthumously as *Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M-y W-y M-e* (London: Osborne Griffin, 1785), vii.
14. Thomas M. Curley, *Samuel Johnson and the Age of Travel* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1976), 53.
15. M. Blondell, "Le Récit de voyage féminin au XVIIIe siècle." *Bulletin de la Société d'Etudes Anglo-Américaines des XVIIe et XVIIIe Siècles* 18 (June 1984): 104.
16. See Mary Morgan, *A Tour to Milford Haven* (London: Stockdale, 1795); Ann Radcliffe, *Tour of the Lakes* (London: Robinson, 1795); Anne Radcliffe, *Journey through Holland* (London: Robinson, 1795); Mrs. Kindersley, *Letters from the Island of Teneriffe* (London: J. Nourse, 1777).
17. Mrs. Mary Ann Hanway, *A Journey to the Highlands of Scotland* (London: Fielding and Walker, 1776).
18. Anna Riggs, Lady Miller, *Letters from Italy* (London: E. and C. Dilly, 1776), 24-25.
19. Dugaw, 181. See also Dianne Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry, 1650-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 121-143.
20. Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 6, viii. Quoted in Catherine Craft-Fairchild's "Cross-Dressing and the Novel: Women Warriors and Domestic Femininity." *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 10:2 (January 1998): 177. Subsequent page references will appear in parentheses in the text.
21. Johnson, 135.
22. Johnson, 141.
23. Johnson, 134.
24. John S. C. Abbott, *Captain William Kidd, and Others of the Pirates or Buccaneers Who Ravaged the Seas . . .* (New York: Dodd & Mead, 1874), 207.
25. Black, 113.
26. Maurice Besson, *The Scourge of the Indies* (New York: Random House, 1929), 45.
27. Figures 3.2 and 3.3 are held in the National Maritime Museum and are reprinted in Clinton Black's *Pirates of the West Indies*, 105, 108.
28. See Maurice Besson, *The Scourge of the Indies: Buccaneers, Corsairs and Filibusters* (London: G. Routledge, 1929).
29. Margaret R. Miles, "The Virgin's One Bare Breast: Female Nudity and

- Religious Meaning in Tuscan Early Renaissance Culture." In *The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*. Edited by Susan Rubin Suleiman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 205.
30. Miles, 205.
31. Jane Yolen, *The Ballad of the Pirate Queens*. Illustrations by David Shannon. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1995), n.p.
32. Stanley, 18.
33. Edgar Stanton Maclay, *A History of American Privateers* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1899 [1970]), 30.
34. Maclay, 31.
35. Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 283.
36. Sandra Riley, *Homeward Bound: A History of the Bahama Islands to 1850 with a Definitive Study of Abaco in the American Loyalist Plantation Period* (Miami: Island Research, 1983), 54.
37. Rediker, *Between the Devil*, 254.
38. Julie Wheelwright, "Working for a Living," in Stanley, 155.
39. Riley, 60.
40. Frank Stockton, *Buccaneers and Pirates of Our Coasts* (New York: Macmillan, 1898), 257.
41. Stanley, 177.
42. *The Pirates' Own Book: Authentic Narratives of the Most Celebrated Sea Robbers* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1976).
43. Johnson, 140.
44. Abbott, 223.
45. From a broadside ballad printed in Newcastle by W. Fordyce, c. 1830. Houghton Library, Harvard University (Misc. Prints, no. 570784, vol. I, no. 536). Reprinted by Dianne Dugaw in "Rambling Female Sailors," 178-179.
46. John C. Appleby, "Women and Piracy in Ireland: From Gráinne O'Malley to Anne Bonny." In *Women in Early Modern Ireland*. Edited by Margaret MacCurtain and Mary O'Dowd (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 53.
47. Wheelright, 182.
48. Anonymous, *The Daring Exploits of Henry Morgan* (London: n.p., 1813), 26. Quoted in Wheelright in "Tars, Tarts and Swashbucklers." I have been unable to locate any other bibliographic reference for this work.
49. *The Daring Exploits of Henry Morgan*, 27.
50. The work, a copy of which I have been unable to locate, is discussed briefly and quoted in Gérard A. Jaeger's *Les Femmes d'abordage: Chroniques historiques et légendaires des aventurières de la mer* (Paris: Clancier-Guénau, 1984), 7.
51. *The History of the Lives and Bloody Exploits of the Most Noted Pirates: Their Tri-*

- als and Executions. Including a Complete Account of the Late Piracies Committed in the West Indies (Hartford: Silas Andrews & Son, 1855), 189.
52. P. Christian, *Histoire des marins, pirates et corsaires*. 3 vols. (Paris: Cavaillé, 1846–1850.) See vol. III.
53. Of the Hollywood films inspired by the Bonny and Read story, which fall outside the scope of this essay, by far the best is *Anne of the Indies*, a 20th Century Fox production from 1951 directed by Jacques Tourneur. (In 1943, Tourneur had directed another classic set in the Caribbean, *I Walked with a Zombie*, based loosely on Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.) As Anne, the dreaded Captain Providence, Jean Peters excels in the type of swashbuckling action that is usually the province of males. The plot finds Louis Jourdan, a French naval officer whose ship and wife are being held by the British, volunteering to capture Captain Providence. He manages to get aboard her pirate vessel and takes advantage of a natural attraction that springs up between them to trick her with a phony treasure map, thus leading her into a British ambush. However, Anne escapes the trap and takes her vengeance by kidnapping the wife, played by Debra Paget. The treacherous lover is a figure common to many twentieth-century reworkings of the tale, as is the rum-sodden doctor aboard the pirate ship, played here by Herbert Marshall.
54. Frank Shay, *Pirate Wench* (New York: I. Washburn, 1934; London: Hurst & Blackett, 1934). All quotations are from the American edition. Subsequent page references will appear in parentheses in the text.
55. James Bridie and Claud Gurney, *Mary Read: A Play in Three Acts*. London: Constable, 1936). Subsequent page references will appear in parentheses in the text.
56. *Marie Read, femme pirate* by Michel Candie (Paris: Gallimard, 1952). All quotations in English are my translation from the French original. A comparative study between this text and another roughly contemporary novel about Mary Read, *Mary Read, Buccaneer* by Philip Rush (London: T.V. Boardman & Co., 1945), would have perhaps yielded interesting results, but the latter is unavailable. The only copy I have been able to locate (at the New York Public Library) is listed as missing.
57. *Anne Bonny* by Chloe Gartner (New York: Morrow, 1977) also purports to be Anne's own narrative, written as a petition to the court to obtain a pardon. Subsequent page references will appear in parentheses in the text.
58. Candie's focus on Nannytown and the Maroons links *Marie Read, femme pirate* to the two novels Bahamian writer Sandra Riley has dedicated to the story of Bonny and Read, *The Captain's Ladies or Bloody Bay* and *Sometimes Towards Eden*. *The Captain's Ladies* offers a narrative inscribed in the tradition of the erotic romance. The latter work offers a most fanciful sequel to their tale of piracy, as it imagines Anne Bonny's career after her release from prison as that of a Jamaican plantation mistress pitted against Nanny and her maroon town in the Cockpit area of Jamaica, an interesting work in its own

- right but one that falls outside of our purview here. See Sandra Riley, *The Captain's Ladies* (New York: Leisure Books, 1980) and *Sometimes Towards Eden* (Miami: Island Research, 1986).
59. Steve Gooch, *The Women Pirates Anne Bonney and Mary Read* (London: Pluto Press, 1978).
60. John Carlova, *Mistress of the Sea* (New York: Citadel Press, 1964). Subsequent page references will appear in parentheses in the text.
61. Alison York, *The Fire and the Rope* (London: W.H. Allen, 1979).
62. Anne Osborne, *Wind from the Main* (Columbia, SC: Sandlapper Press, Inc., 1972); Pamela Jekel, *Sea Star: The Private Life of Anne Bonny, Pirate Queen* (New York: Harmony, 1983).
63. Erica Jong, *Fanny: Being the True History of the Adventures of Fanny Hackabout-Jones* (New York: New American Library, 1980). Subsequent page references will appear in parentheses in the text.
64. Sarah Kofman, in *L'enigme de la femme: La Femme dans les textes de Freud* (Paris: Galilée, 1980). See Naomi Schor, "Female Fetishism: The Case of George Sand." In *The Female Body in Western Culture*. Edited by Susan Rubin Suleiman, 368.
65. Schor, 369.
66. Elizabeth Berg, "The Third Woman." *Diacritics* 12 (1982): 13.
67. See Piedra's essay in this volume.