

UC Santa Barbara

Volume 2 (2020)

Title

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Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8h63v4rx>

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Publication Date

2020-10-01

Real and Imagined: The Lives of Anne Bonny and Mary Read

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the lives of two of the most well-known female pirates, Anne Bonny and Mary Read. Within this paper I analyze different documents that relate plausible histories of these two women's lives and differentiate between the accuracy of sources. I question modes of discussing these women and utilize a variety of secondary sources to examine primary sources and their impacts. This paper critiques standard discussions and histories of these two women, instead offering a more humanizing and historically accurate way of seeing them that exists outside of popular culture's romanticism and mythologization of them.

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Introduction

According to David Cordingly, a scholar of pirates and a former staff member of the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, England,¹ a pirate is "someone who robs and plunders on the sea."² Pirates have long been a subject of fascination. Romantic tales of swashbuckling men are embedded in our mythologized historical cannon, and perhaps no pirates have been more romanticized than two female pirates: Anne Bonny and Mary Read. These two women have been the subject of myth and legend for hundreds of years, and each retelling of their tale has added another layer to what has become one of the most mythologized narratives of pirate history. Who were these women beneath the trappings of popular culture?

The Tryals of Captain John Rackam

When presented with the countless mediums that have displayed the lives of these women to the general public for generations, one might think that a plethora of documents survive to tell the tale of the lives of Anne Bonny and Mary Read.

Surprisingly, strikingly little survives. The most definitive source is a document entitled "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam and Other Pirates." This trial transcript, printed in 1721, is likely the most accurate surviving primary source available. However, it leaves historians with many gaps. Due to this being a governmental document, it contains a bias towards the British government and their colonial Vice Admiralty courts, which had committed themselves to hunting down pirates and ridding the ocean of their threat.³ Julie Wheelwright, a scholar of historical women's roles in armed conflicts,⁴ notes that Admiralty Courts were designed to efficiently gather pirates' booty: "As with Read and Bonny, such a high volume of business often meant that crucial elements of a case went missing."⁵ These are the holes that both creative writers and historians have been trying to fill for centuries.

The transcript documents the hearings of all of John Rackam's crew, a pirate better known as 'Calico Jack' who was, according to Cordingly, "a small time pirate."⁶ Pages 15-19 record the trials of the two female pirates onboard Rackam's ship: Anne Bonny and Mary Read. The two pirate women were tried on November 28th, 1720.⁷ The court accused Bonny and Read for a number of piratical crimes, including plundering and taking various vessels,⁸ and both pleaded 'Not Guilty' to the charges.⁹ The prosecution presented a number of witnesses. Dorothy Thomas, the first witness, who was in a canoa taken by Rackam's pirates, testified that "the

¹ David Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and the Reality of Life Among the Pirates* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2006).

² Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, xvii.

³ Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, 203

⁴ "Dr Julie Wheelwright." City, University of London, March 17, 2020. <https://www.city.ac.uk/people/academics/julie-wheelwright>.

⁵ Jo Stanley, *Bold in Her Breeches: Women Pirates across the Ages* (London: Pandora, 1996), 179.

⁶ Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, 57

⁷ "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam," *The Post and Courier*, uploaded November 19, 2018, 15. https://www.postandcourier.com/the-tryals-of-captain-john-rackam-and-other-pirates/pdf_68970990-ded9-11e8-be44-1b1f-2868c03d.html

⁸ "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam," 16-17.

⁹ "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam."

10 "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam," 18.

11 "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam," 18.

12 According to Cordingly, the term [sloop] was used in the early eighteenth century to describe a range of craft with a variety of rigs. 13 "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam," 18-19.

14 "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam," 19.

15 "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam," 19.

16 "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam," 19.

17 David Cordingly, *Women Sailors and Sailors Women: An Untold Maritime History* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2002), 80.

18 Cordingly, *Women Sailors and Sailors Women*, 80

19 Cordingly, *Women Sailors and Sailors Women*, 80

20 "Marcus Rediker," Department of History, University of Pittsburgh, accessed March 17, 2020. <http://www.history.pitt.edu/people/marcus-rediker>.

21 Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling, *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3.

22 Daniel Defoe and Manuel Schonhorn, *A General History of the Pyrates* (Newburyport: Dover Publications, 2012), 153.

Two Women, Prisoners at the Bar, were on Board the said Sloop, wore Mens Jackets, and long Trouzers, and Handkerchiefs tied about their Heads; and that each of them had a Machete and a Pistol in their Hands." They "cursed and swore at the Men, to murder [Thomas]." She also reports "That the reason for her knowing and believing them to be women then was, by the largeness of their Breasts."10 Two Frenchmen, John Befneck and Peter Cornelian, described Anne Bonny and Mary Read as "very active on Board, and willing to do any Thing." They handed gunpowder to the other men, and gave chase and attacked when seeing any other vessel. "[T]hey wore Men's Cloaths; and, at other times, They wore Women's Cloaths." Importantly, these men noted that "they did not seem to be kept, or detain'd by Force, but of their own Free-Will and Consent."11 The next witness, Thomas Dillon, whose sloop12 was assaulted by gunfire from the pirate crew, described both women as "cursing and swearing much, and very ready and willing to do any Thing on Board."13 Neither pirate made any defense or objection to the sentence of death.14 Yet, after the verdict had been declared, "You [...] shall be severally hanged by the necks 'till you are severally dead."15 Both women declared that they were pregnant, and their judgement was postponed until an inspection had been made.16

Charles Johnson's A General History of Pyrates

Charles Johnson, a man about whom historians know almost nothing, is the author of one of the key texts of European pirate history and literature.17 His book, *A General History of the Pyrates*, catalogues the lives, adventures, and deaths of numerous pirates. The book was published in 1724, only a few years after Bonny and Read's trial.18 We know very little about his research methods for this publication, except that he "must have attended several pirate trials in London and that he interviewed pirates and seamen who had voyaged with them."19 The book is divided into sections covering various pirate escapades, and he dedicates a portion of his book to telling the stories of Anne Bonny and Mary Read, the only two female pirates mentioned. Many historians and popular authors take Johnson's history as fact, often repeating and retelling his transcription of their lives without question. Marcus Rediker, an expert on Atlantic History,20 writes, "Much of what is known about the lives of these extraordinary women appeared originally in *A General History of the Pyrates*."21 Even if historians don't agree with everything Johnson writes, all historians discussing these two women's lives or the lives of many other pirates in the early 18th

century, refer and respond to *A General History*.

Johnson gives a detailed account about the personal lives of these two women. He records that Mary Read was born in England as the illegitimate child of a woman whose sailor husband had never returned to her.22 Mary Read was brought up as a boy due to her mother's strategy to receive funds from her mother-in-law. Disguised as a male, she subsequently served in various military roles until she married a comrade.23 Sadly, Read's husband died and she was again forced to join the army to make money.24 She boarded a vessel later captured by pirates.25 The pirates kept her onboard disguised as a man, and she apparently performed well. She is reported as "call[ing] to those under Deck, to come up fight like Men, and finding they did not stir, fired her Arms down the Hold amongst them, killing one, and wounding others." and "fought [another pirate] at Sword and Pistol, and killed him upon the Spot."26 She fell in love with an impressed pirate onboard the ship and revealed her disguised gender to him, as well as to Anne Bonny and subsequently Rackam, the captain of the ship.27 Johnson describes her as noble and reluctant about piracy, writing that many spectators at her trial " had Compassion for her."28 Although her judgement was avoided by her pregnancy (which was by her lover), she died of a fever in prison.29 Anne Bonny's story follows somewhat similar themes of love and ferocity, although Bonny is not given the nobility and chastity of Read. After a convoluted plot about stolen spoons and sexual interludes, readers learn that she was born the illegitimate daughter of an attorney and his maid.30 Her father disguised her as a male clerk.31 To the disappointment of her father she married a sailor and moved with him to Providence. It was here that she met Rackam, with whom she decided to elope and go to sea disguised as a man, later having a child by him. She proved to be fierce; "no Body was more forward or courageous than she."32 Johnson concludes that the only thing we know about her after her trial and a subsequent stint in prison is "that she was not executed."33 Johnson's stories of these two women are the majority of what lives on in pirate history and mythology as the legacies of Anne Bonny and Mary Read.

Despite its relatively open-armed acceptance, the question of *A General History's* credibility must be asked. In this essay, I will only cover Johnson's credibility concerning his reporting on the lives of Anne Bonny and Mary Read, and will not comment on his credibility elsewhere in his book. We know of only two sources Johnson uses for this story: the trial papers, and alleged contemporary accounts. The editor of my copy of Johnson's *History*, Manuel Schonhorn, who does not question Johnson's accuracy and credits this work to Daniel Defoe, the author of *Robinson Crusoe*, comments in

23 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 154.

24 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 155.

25 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 155.

26 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 157-158. 27 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 156-157. 28 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 158.

29 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 159.

30 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 159-163. 31 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 164.

32 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 165.

33 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 165.

34 Cordingly verifies in *Women Sailors and Sailors Women: An Untold Maritime History* that although at one point many thought that Charles Johnson was in fact Daniel Defoe's pseudonym, this has since been disproven. - 0

35 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 674

36 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 164

37 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 61

38 Cordingly, *Women Sailors*, 83; Defoe, *A General History*

39 "Legislative Acts/Legal Proceedings," *Boston Gazette*, October 17, 1720: [3]. Readex: *America's Historical Newspapers*.

40 *Boston Gazette*, October 17, 1720: [2]. Readex: *America's Historical Newspapers*.

his notes, "Defoe's source is the published Tryals of Captain John Rackam [...] I have been unable to find published material on the Rackam-Read-Bonny liaisons, though contemporary accounts seem to have been readily available to Defoe."³⁴ ³⁵ Researchers must assume that the only certain sources Johnson used were the Tryal document and conversations and investigations with contemporary sources who were connected to Bonny and Read. We do not know if he was personally present at the Rackam trial or not. The text indicates that Johnson did in fact conduct enquiries while formulating this history. Concerning a story about Bonny, he writes, "but upon further Enquiry, I found this story to be groundless."³⁶ However, it is unagreed upon whether some parts or none of Johnson's narrative are in fact fictional. Because of the nature of the number of sources, many historians and artists rely on primarily these two documents to inform them of the factual lives of Anne Bonny and Mary Read. Cordingly writes, "The printed record of their trial and brief references in the colonial documents and contemporary newspapers provide information about the last year or two of their lives, but for the rest we have to rely on Captain Johnson, who is usually accurate but rarely indicates the source of his information."³⁷ Johnson's track record of legitimacy, which has been researched by other historians, inclines many to believe that he is also accurate within this particular segment of his work. Is that entirely the case, or did Johnson allow himself some artistic license?

In order to assess the accuracy of Johnson's narrative, I will hold it against the few other primary sources we have and search for compatibilities and incongruences. A significant consonance is Rackam's record of location, and how it lines up with contemporary news reports. Cordingly points out, "[Johnson's] description of their time with Rackam is closely borne out by other contemporary documents."³⁸ On September 5, 1720, Governor Woodes Rogers of New Providence published a declaration, stating that Rackam and his crew were in the area, which corresponds with Johnson's report of their travels.³⁹ On October 17, 1720, the *Boston Gazette* reported "Several pirates are on the coast of the Bahamas, among which one Rackum who Run away with a Sloop of 6 Guns, and took with him 12 Men and Two Women."⁴⁰ This also lines up with Rackam's description of the locations of these pirates.⁴¹ Clearly, Johnson did his research when it came to the geographical and temporal details of the story.

Despite this, there is a striking contradiction between the testimonies in the Tryal document and Johnson's report. Much of Johnson's story hinges on the fact that these were women disguised as men. Both Bonny and Read are portrayed as guarding the secret

of their sex from other crew members.⁴² However, during the trial, no witnesses testify to these women having been in a disguise. Although Thomas, Befneck, and Cornelian all describe the women as having been sometimes attired in mens' clothing, none of them seem to have thought they were actually men. Thomas mentions knowing immediately that they were women due to "largeness of their Breasts,"⁴³ and the Frenchmen describe them as sometimes wearing women's clothing.⁴⁴ It appears from these testimonies that these women were not disguised at all, but in fact freely presented their gender, sometimes wearing womens' or mens' clothes, and not using either to display a gendered disguise. Wheelwright points out, "This testimony suggests that the women were not disguised on the ship but simply wore male clothes for convenience during raids."⁴⁵ From Woodes Rogers' declaration and also the notice in the *Boston Gazette*, it seems that the general public seems to have known that they were women as well. The latter describes the crew as containing "Two Women," and the former lists them by name: "Whereas John Rackum, George Featherstone, John Davis, Andrew Gibson, John Howell, Noah Patrick ----&c. and two women Ann Fulford alias Bonny & Mary Read."⁴⁶ It seems that Johnson either assumed or fabricated the concept of these women as masquerading. It also appears that Johnson may have added some embellishments to the trial scene. Wheelwright notes that, within Johnson's History, Read is accused of killing a man below decks during her trial, which she apparently denies.⁴⁷ No record of this appears in the Tryal transcript, with Read and Bonny providing no statements until their declaration of pregnancy.⁴⁸ Johnson also reports Read "commended the Justice of the Court before which she was try'd, for distinguishing the Nature of their Crimes; her Husband, as she call'd him, with several others, being acquitted; and being asked, who he was? she would not tell, but, said he was an honest man [...]"⁴⁹ Again, there is no record of this in the Tryal transcript. Whether Johnson was told misinformation by people he interviewed that were present at the trial, or if he created these stories, it is uncertain. Either way, his work on the subject must be evaluated as perhaps not wholly trustworthy.

The General History and Subsequent Romantization

Charles Johnson was likely not a woman, and this fact, coupled with the realities of the inaccuracy of parts of his story, means that his account cannot be trusted to portray an accurate female lens. In reference to Johnson's History, Wheelwright points out, "There is at best one reference to women every 15 pages; the often-degradatory fragments about women involved with Anglo-American

41 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 148-150.

42 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 155-165.

43 "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam," 18.

44 "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam," 18. 45 Stanley, *Bold in Her Breeches*, 180.

46 "Legislative Acts/Legal Proceedings."

47 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 156; Stanley, *Bold in Her Breeches*, 183. 48 "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam," 15-19.

49 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 158.

50 Stanley, *Bold in Her Breeches*, 114.

50 Stanley, *Bold in Her Breeches*, 114.

51 Stanley, *Bold in Her Breeches*, 181.

52 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 157.

53 Stanley, *Bold in Her Breeches*, 177.

seafaring appear merely as background, as part of the taken-for-granted scenery⁵⁰ She also claims that "The author takes full command of poetic license to flesh out the details of the pirate heroine's histories and characters.⁵¹" There are a number of instances during Johnson's story that indicate a male-emphasis and narrative license, which robs these women of their humanity. When Johnson explains Read's reveal of her gender to her lover aboard the ship, he describes it as "carelessly shewing her Breasts, which were very white."⁵² The sensuality of this scene as well as Johnson's emphasis of the whiteness of her breasts reeks of fetishization and pornographic intent. How Johnson could have possibly known the exact circumstances of this private moment, let alone the hue of her breasts, is a mystery at best.

Moreover, it is unlikely that this moment ever happened, due to the aforementioned disguise being most likely a myth. Throughout the narrative there is also an intense focus on the sexual and romantic realms, both of these two women and of other women involved in the stories. There is more documentation about women's private sexual lives than actual acts of piracy in Johnson's narrative. An in-depth exploration of Bonny, Read, and their respective mothers' romantic lives is included, but merely four actual acts having to do with piracy are told, only two of which go into any detail about the women's role in these episodes.

The fact that Johnson is so transfixed on their sexual lives (and because of this initial obsession, so are subsequent historians and writers) completely limits these women to a traditional female sphere of domesticity, sexuality, and motherhood despite them being figures that stepped outside of socially imposed roles, and strips them of their autonomy, making them into objects of male desire and available for exploitation by the reader. Wheelwright claims "the pirate legend also reminds readers that the heroine's flight from domestic commitments was a temporary state: the ferocious Anne Bonny doubled as Captain Rackham's mistress and the mother of his child; Mary Read offered to give up piracy for 'some honest livelihood, to settle with her common-law husband'"⁵³ Johnson's sexualization and development of these women as caricatures instead of historical figures also allows them to be acceptable heroines for future generations, which they are clearly not and never intended to be. Their numerous piratical and violent acts as detailed in the Tryal showcase them as anything but female role

models and heroines of nobility.

Seeing These Women as Complex Humans: The Likely Realities of Their Lives as Pirates

Once these historical figures have been stripped of their mythic and popular associations, one can assess what the realities of their lives most likely were. Jo Stanley, the lead "research facilitator at the National Maritime Museum's collaborative community project on women's maritime history,"⁵⁴ covers some specifics of what women's lives may have been like aboard pirate vessels. She says, "The ships on which women set foot were complex workplaces with their own lifestyles."⁵⁵ Cooperation and proficiency were key, and Bonny and Read certainly existed as a part of this structure.⁵⁶ Wheelwright writes that "they were not marginalized but played a central role in Rackham's raids, as integral members of a tightly knit group."⁵⁷ Testimonies from the trial of the women being "very active on Board, and willing to do any Thing" gives the impression that they were involved in all aspects of the ship.⁵⁸ Rediker points out that "[t]hey also affirmed one of the principal values and standards of conduct among both seamen and pirates, that is, an unwritten code of courage,"⁵⁹ as is affirmed by the testimonies that they were readily willing to attack and give chase to other vessels.⁶⁰ As women, though, they would've faced certain challenges that may not have been apparent to male crewmembers. Stanley mentions that "[w]omen would have to cope not only with menstruation but perhaps with pregnancy, post-natal, or post-abortion symptoms."⁶¹ It also may have been much harder for these women to gain respect and recognition by their crew as equals. They may have acted extra-violent and tough, "cursing and swearing much"⁶² in order to prove themselves as worthy of a place in the crew. Wheelwright ventures to say, "Sociological studies today show that women and men on occasion act the part of a violent person in order to maintain the respect of their peer group."⁶³ However, she also discusses how cruelty is profitable as well, and it is possible that these women acted violently to receive the maximum amount of money for their work, like the rest of the pirates onboard.⁶⁴ Wheelwright also mentions that violence could serve as a form of "mistargeted social retaliation," which could certainly be true of women who possibly felt frustrated and confined by society's restrictions and abuse of their sex.⁶⁵

According to the testimonies, Bonny and Read probably wore a combination of men's and women's clothes, likely choosing whichever best suited the occasion.⁶⁶ This was much more freedom of dress than would have been afforded to them on land.

54 "Jo Stanley," Jo Stanley, accessed March 17, 2020. <http://www.jostanley.biz/>. 55 Stanley, *Bold in Her Breeches*, 164.

56 Stanley, *Bold in Her Breeches*, 164.

57 Stanley, *Bold in Her Breeches*, 180.

58 "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam," 18.

59 Creighton and Norling, *Iron Men, Wooden Women*, 13. 60 "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam," 18.

61 Stanley, *Bold in Her Breeches*, 165.

62 "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam," 19.

63 Stanley, *Bold in Her Breeches*, 171.

64 Stanley, *Bold in Her Breeches*, 171.

65 Stanley, *Bold in Her Breeches*, 171.

66 "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam," 18.

67 Creighton and Norling, *Iron Men, Wooden Women*.

68 Creighton and Norling, *Iron Men, Wooden Women*; Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 160, "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam," 18.

69 "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam," 18.

70 Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 153-165.

71 Creighton and Norling, *Iron Men, Wooden Women*, 11.

72 Creighton and Norling, *Iron Men, Wooden Women*, 15. 73 "The Tryals of Captain John Rackam," 18.

The jackets and trousers described on page 18 of the Tryal are illustrated in a drawing, dated 1724 by an unknown English artist.⁶⁷ This drawing first appeared in the *General History*, and depicts them in loose mens' clothing, carrying weapons and wearing handkerchiefs around their heads, as stated in the transcript.⁶⁸

What were these women's reasons for choosing a life of piracy? It appears from the trial testimonies that these women were certainly pirates by their own consent, and that they had chosen this life for themselves as the best option, despite its challenges and moral implications.⁶⁹ Johnson seems to attribute their choice mainly to issues of love and financial struggle.⁷⁰ In summarizing Johnson's narrative, Rediker (assuming the truth of the cross-dressing myth) writes, "Read did it largely out of poverty and economic necessity, while Bonny, turning her back on her father's fortune, followed her instincts for love and adventure"⁷¹ These two statements neatly tie up why a woman might choose to do something transgressive or immoral, and subverts the choice into something heroic and noble. However, when viewing these women as complete humans, their choice to become pirates was likely more complex. These things may have played into their choices, but by confining them into the realm of the heroic and justified we fail to see them as they truly were: people who chose a life of crime and brutality for their own gain. Even if their need was fully justified, the ends do not always justify the means. Maybe these women were drawn to piracy and the sea for similar reasons as men: adventure, opportunity, wealth, freedom, or desperation, but also for reasons unique to them that had to do with the realities of social constraints women faced. It's entirely possible that love, wanderlust, or economic necessity were factors, but it's important not to over-simplify or romanticize historical data into a fairytale-esque, idealized story, and lose sight of these women's true identities and complexities.

Conclusion

Despite the amount of personal drive and ability to overcome obstacles these women possessed, their histories are still plagued with underlying tones of sexism and romanticism. Historians have a tendency to perpetuate false and sexist narratives simply by regurgitating the primary sources we have and failing to see them as lodged in a mode of hyper-masculinity. They may feel that this is justified because Johnson's *History* is usually fairly accurate, and the primary sources we have about these women and their lives are limited. In reality, this is robbing both these female historical figures and all other women of being viewed from a fair and equal historical lens. By perpetuating these myths an oxymoron is created; women are pushed into the masculine world in order to

make them worth paying attention to while simultaneously confining them to the hyperfeminine in order to make them palatable for the male reader and to prevent them from gaining an equal status as men. We continually fail to see historical women like Anne Bonny and Mary Read as credible not because of their gender, but because of what they actually did. Society is also insistent on painting them into heroines and role models, stripping their identities to portraits that fit neatly inside the patriarchal female cannon of notable women. Rediker writes, "even though Bonny and Read did not transform the terms in which the broader societal discussion of gender took place, and even though they apparently did not see their own exploits as a call for rights and equality for all women, their very lives and subsequent popularity nonetheless represented a subversive commentary on the gender relations of their own times as well as "a powerful symbol of unconventional womanhood" for the future."⁷² In contrast to this, I argue that there is in fact no conventional womanhood, since all womanhood is essentially radical because the norm is seen as the masculine. In this sense, Anne Bonny and Mary Read are no longer pedestalized for their sex, but can be seen as figures who made decisions based on realities. Witness Dorothy Thomas more than likely did not view these women as feminist icons. She likely saw them for what they were: criminals who were out to harm her and steal her possessions.⁷³ Instead of fetishizing female ferocity, historians need to focus on the realities of Anne Bonny and Mary Read's lives, as well as the decisions they made that don't fit neatly inside of the male-imposed historical female cannon. These women were not fighting to become a symbol, but for themselves, tooth and nail and all the way to the gallows. These were criminals, cruel and vicious robbers who were ultimately sentenced to (unfulfilled) hanging for their crimes. They lived complex lives and had complex reasons for their choices, and were not attempting to fit into any category or branch of feminism or romanticism that we as modern historians may wish to pin them into today. They were wholly human, wholly female, and wholly powerful.

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About the Author

Vivian Walman-Randall is a second year UCSB student. She is majoring in Creative Writing and Literature within the College of Creative Studies, and minoring in Art History within the College of Letters and Science. Vivian has been working on an ongoing project revolving around female pirates and representations of them with her faculty mentor Alison Williams, a lecturer in the Writing Department. Her primary focuses are historical, literary, and art historical research, nature poetry, and fiction. Vivian intends to attend graduate school to obtain a PhD, possibly in literature.