THE RADICAL AND ALTERNATIVE SOCIETY OF THE GOLDEN AGE PIRATE – MYTH OR REALITY?

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Since the 1980s the historiography of golden age piracy has increasingly emphasised the development of a radical and alternative society amongst Anglo-American pirates; a society based on egalitarianism and democracy. Much of this emphasis can be attributed to the social historian Marcus Rediker, who seminal works have argued that the pirates of the early eighteenth-century created a social world for themselves which deliberately contrasted, and therefore challenged, the social order of conventional society; a social order in which a rich and powerful minority governed and dictated the existence of a largely powerless labouring class majority. Rediker's pirates were thus social-revolutionaries, and he has argued that the creation of their radical social order, along with their depredations, were a form of social protest against the social order enforced by the oppressive rich. Such views, however, have not gone unchallenged. Indeed, Peter Earle has accused Rediker and other social historians of infusing their work with fantasy, and of seeking to emphasise radicalism as a result of their own radical persuasion.

However, this thesis confirms that the pirates of the early eighteenth-century did, indeed, create a radical and alternative society for themselves; a society with its own radical, egalitarian social order. Furthermore, this thesis confirms that this piratical society also had its own unique culture; a culture which differed markedly from that of conventional society. This thesis therefore confirms that the radical and alternative society of the golden age pirate is not based on fantasy; indeed, it is based on reality not myth. Such confirmation is based on evidence gathered from a wide range of primary source material, such as contemporary newspapers and journals, published accounts of pirate trials, and various correspondence between officials in the Americas and the Council of Trade and Plantations. This primary source base is also supplemented with secondary material.

Contents

Abbreviations

BPGA   Baer, Joel H. (ed.), *British Piracy in the Golden Age: History and Interpretation, 1660 – 1730* (4 Vols, London, 2007).

CSPC   Headlam, Cecil (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Colonial Series, America and West Indies* (London, 1930 – 1936).

WTDH   Owens, W. R. and Furbank, P. N. (general eds.), *Writings on Travel, Discovery and History by Daniel Defoe* (8 Vols, London, 2001).

Introduction

In December 1718, the Governor of Virginia, Alexander Spotswood, wrote a letter to the Council of Trade and Plantations which contained, amongst other matters, an account of an infamous pirate's last stand. Spotswood described how, after hearing complaints regarding the pirate's depredations along the North Carolina coast, and suspecting that its government's inability to deal with the menace was rooted in corruption, he financed an expedition to exterminate the pirate and his crew.[1] On November 22nd, under the command of Lieutenant Robert Maynard, two sloops manned with over fifty armed men set sail to engage with the pirates at Ocracoke inlet.[2] As the sloops approached the pirates, and Maynard and his men prepared to board their ship, the pirate captain let out one final cry of defiance. Spotswood described how 'As soon as he perceived the King's men intended to board him, he took up a bowl of liquor and calling out to the Officers of the other sloops, drank Damnation to anyone that should give or ask quarter, and then discharged his great guns loaded with partridge shott, wch. Killed and wounded twenty of the King's men'.[3] A bloody battle then ensued in which the pirate captain and nine of his crew were killed.[4] Maynard then severed the pirate captain's head from his body, and hung it from the bowsprit of his sloop.[5]

The pirate captain was Edward Teach, also known as 'Blackbeard', one of the most infamous pirates of a period which has become known as the 'golden age' of piracy. Spotswood had described the pirates that

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[1] Letter from Governor Alexander Spotswood to the Council of Trade and Plantations, December 22, 1718, *CSPC, 1717 – 1718*, pp. 425 – 435; Peter H. Wood, 'Teach, Edward [Blackbeard] (d. 1718)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004 – 2014) http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27097 (accessed 26 Feb 2014; hereafter cited as Wood, 'Teach', *ODNB.*)
[2] Spotswood to the Council of Trade and Plantations, December 22, 1718, *CSPC, 1717 – 1718*, p. 431; Wood, 'Teach', *ODNB*.
[3] Spotswood to the Council of Trade and Plantations, December 22, 1718, *CSPC, 1717 – 1718*, p. 431.
[4] Ibid. p. 431.
[5] Daniel Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, Manuel Schonhorn (ed.) (Vol. 1, 4th edn., 1726, Vol. 2, 1728, combined and reprinted New York, 1999), pp. 81 – 83; Spotswood to the Council of Trade and Plantations, December 22, 1718, *CSPC, 1717 – 1718*, p. 431; Wood, 'Teach', *ODNB*.

operated during this period as a 'fraternity'.[6] Indeed, Marcus Rediker has since argued that these pirates were part of an alternative community; a criminal society with a unique and radical social order, and one that displayed a consciousness of kind through its actions, customs and symbolism.[7] The purpose of this thesis will be to confirm that this was indeed the case; that the pirates of this period did create for themselves a separate and alternative society, with its own unique and radical social order, and its own unique culture and identity. However, before this subject matter can be addressed, some initial clarification is needed with regard to the 'golden age' period itself.

Although this term has been widely used by historians of piracy, there is some dispute on when the period began and ended. In *The Golden Age of Piracy*, Hugh F. Rankin gives a somewhat expansive definition of the period which begins in the 1630s and ends in the 1720s.[8] John C. Appleby gives a slightly narrower definition of 1650 to 1720.[9] Narrower still, are the definitions given by Douglas Botting and Jenifer Marx; Botting's golden age began in 1691 and ended in 1723, while Marx's began in 1692 and ended in 1725.[10] Both Joel Baer and Marcus Rediker however, give definitions of a golden age which can be broken down into distinct phases. Baer argues that his golden age, from 1660 to approximately 1730, falls into three separate phases: that of state-sponsored piracy from 1660 to 1690; Indian Ocean piracy from 1690 to 1700; and a final phase of Atlantic piracy from 1700 to 1722. Likewise, Rediker's golden age, which spans the period from approximately 1650 to 1730, is also broken down into three phases similar to that of Baer's: the buccaneer period of 1650 to 1680; the Indian Ocean piracy of the 1690s; and the Atlantic piracy of 1716 to 1726.[11] While these definitions are certainly varied, particularly with regards to when the period began, there is nevertheless consensus that it encompassed the latter

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[6] Letter from Colonel Alexander Spotswood to the Council of Trade and Plantations, June 16, 1724, *CSPC, 1724 – 1725*, p. 113.
[7] Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations* (London, 2004), pp. 16, 94 – 95.
[8] Hugh F. Rankin, *The Golden Age of Piracy* (New York, 1969).
[9] John C. Appleby, *Under The Bloody Flag: Pirates of the Tudor Age* (Stroud, 2009).
[10] Douglas Botting, *The Pirates* (Amsterdam, 1978); Jenifer Marx, *Pirates and Privateers of the Caribbean* (Malabar, 1992).
[11] Joel Baer, *Pirates of the British Isles* (Stroud, 2005); Rediker, *Villains*.

decades of the seventeenth century, and did not go beyond the first three decades of the eighteenth.

The golden age then, it can be reasonably suggested, lasted for approximately seventy years. This is a relatively short period of time given the long history of maritime predation. Philip Gosse states that 'Piracy, like murder, is one of the earliest of recorded human activities'.[12] Indeed, for as long as there have been merchant ships transporting goods across the globe, there have been those who have gained financially by preying on such vessels.[13] However, notwithstanding its short timescale, the golden age was arguably the worst period in this long history of maritime robbery. It was a period that witnessed a significant rise in the numbers of those going out, as Lieutenant Governor Benjamin Bennett of Bermuda put it, 'on the account'.[14] And as the numbers escalated, so too did the violence, as the nature of plundering vessels dictates its necessity.[15] Thus the period was one of mass criminality and violence at sea, and would certainly have been anything but 'golden' to those who were unlucky enough to suffer at the hands of the pirates of this era. Given this, it is therefore somewhat ironic that a period of mass violent crime, in which there were many victims, should become known as such. There are, however, possible explanations for this.

Peter Earle explains that the term 'golden age' is a 'soubriquet which may merely reflect the fact that a lot more is known about the pirates of these years than those of any other time'.[16] Indeed, there is a great deal of evidence which has survived from this era of piracy. British and colonial newspapers and journals, such as *The British Journal*, *The Weekly Journal*, *The Boston News-Letter*, and *The Boston Gazette*, published various reports of pirate attacks which gave detailed accounts of their barbarity. Correspondence between London and the American colonies can also be found which contain information regarding piracy and its suppression. First-

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[12] Philip Gosse, *The History of Piracy* (New York, 1932), p. 1.
[13] J. L. Anderson, 'Piracy and World History: An Economic Perspective on Maritime Predation', *Journal of World History*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1995), pp. 175 – 199.
[14] Lieutenant Governor Bennett to the Council of Trade and Plantations, May 31, 1718, *CSPC, 1717 – 1718*, p. 261.
[15] Peter Earle, *The Pirate Wars* (London, 2004), p. 126.
[16] Ibid. p. 163.

hand accounts of time spent amongst pirates were also published, such as William Snelgrave's *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave-Trade*, which describes the author's capture by pirates in 1719. Nevertheless, it can be argued that rather than justifying the use of the term 'golden age', this abundance of source material serves to act as evidence of the crime and violence that these pirates engaged in, and therefore makes such an explanation questionable. However, a second possible explanation for the term golden age also originates from this contemporary material, albeit from a single source in particular.

In *Pirates and Privateers of the Caribbean*, Marx describes a pirate that most would be familiar with. 'His scarred hide is tanned mahogany by sun … He swaggers about the deck in … greasy finery stolen at sword point … A hoop dangles from one ear … Drunk or sober, his gaze seems fixed on an invisible horizon … From the top of his tricorn hat to the tip of his boots the classic pirate, with his brace of pistols, boarding axe, cutlass and saber'.[17] Such pirates may also sport eye patches, or have a wooden leg, or a hook instead of a hand; they may also have a parrot perched on their shoulder. Their love of pieces of eight is only matched by their love of rum, a drink which they consume before ordering their poor captives to walk the plank. These pirates may also bury their treasure on a secluded desert island, with only an 'x' on a map to mark its location. They may shout 'Yo, ho, ho', or 'Shiver me timbers', or simply 'Arrgh'. They can be dashing or gruesome, are sometimes comical, but are usually heroic, daring, and exciting.

Such pirates are no doubt familiar to many because they are somewhat stereotypical. They conform to a stereotype which has become the accepted modern day image of the 'classic' pirate; an image which originates from the golden age. This image is part fact, and part fiction, and is the final stage in an evolutionary process which began with the publication of Captain Charles Johnson's *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the most notorious Pyrates*. First published in 1724, Johnson's *History* describes in vivid detail the lives and depredations

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[17] Marx, *Pirates and Privateers*, p. 187.

of the pirates of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. A literary success, the first edition was quickly followed by further editions and an added volume, and edited re-prints of these books continue to be published to this day. Despite this success however, little is known about Johnson, and speculation surrounds his actual identity.[18] In the 1930s the American professor, John Robert Moore, claimed that Johnson was in fact a pseudonym for Daniel Defoe, although this argument was to be challenged convincingly in the 1980s by New York University's P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens.[19] David Cordingly acknowledges that in their counter-argument, 'Furbank and Owens were so thorough in their demolition of Moore's theories that it seems we must abandon the attractive idea that Defoe wrote the *History of the Pyrates* and look elsewhere'.[20] Whoever Johnson actually was, he had intimate knowledge of ships, seamanship, and its terminology.[21] This suggests that he was most likely someone who had spent time at sea, and as he also had an intimate and detailed knowledge of pirates and their ways, he may possibly have been one himself, or at least spent some time amongst them.[22] Such detailed knowledge thus made Johnson's *History* the first great history of this period of piracy, and as such it has become fundamental to its study.[23] It is, however, not without its criticism.

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[18] H. R. Tedder, 'Johnson, Charles (fl. 1724 – 1734)', rev. David Cordingly, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004 – 2014) http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14867 (accessed 11 April 2014; hereafter cited as Tedder, rev. Cordingly, 'Johnson', *ODNB*); Peter T. Leeson, *The Invisible Hook: The Hidden Economics of Pirates* (Woodstock, 2009), p. 209.

[19] David Cordingly, 'Introduction', in Captain Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Robberies & Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates* (3rd edn., 1725, reprinted London, 2002, with an introduction and commentary by David Cordingly), pp. xi – xiii; Tedder, rev. Cordingly, 'Johnson', *ODNB*.

[20] Cordingly, 'Introduction', in Johnson, *General History*, p. xiii.

[21] Ibid. pp. xiii – xiv.

[22] Gosse, *The History of Piracy*, p. 185.

[23] This thesis makes use of two re-printed editions of Johnson's *History*; one edited by Manuel Schonhorn, and one with an introduction and commentary by David Cordingly. Schonhorn attributes Johnson's work to Daniel Defoe, whereas Cordingly attributes it to Johnson himself. When Johnson is quoted or used in this thesis, from either of these sources, he will be known as 'Johnson'. However, when these two sources appear in the footnotes, they will appear as Daniel Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, Manuel Schonhorn (ed.) (Vol. 1, 4th edn., 1726, Vol. 2, 1728, combined and reprinted New York, 1999), and Captain Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Robberies & Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates* (3rd edn., 1725, reprinted London, 2002, with an introduction and commentary by David Cordingly).

In *Treasure Neverland*, a recent study of the interrelations between factual and fictional pirates, Neil Rennie states that Johnson's *History* is 'sensational and unreliable'.[24] Furthermore, he argues that the *History* 'belongs to the dawning age of the novel'.[25] Such criticism is in itself not entirely reliable, however, as Johnson's *History*, when cross-checked against other contemporary sources, such as letters of correspondence found in the *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series*, and reports published in journals and newspapers, is found to contain a great deal of factual information. Given this, it would be foolish to dismiss Johnson's *History* as a completely unreliable work of fiction. Nonetheless, it would also be foolish to dismiss Rennie's argument as completely unfounded, as it does hold some substance, even if it is not entirely correct.

Despite containing factual information, Johnson's *History* nevertheless contains content which as of yet cannot be corroborated, and its truth is therefore questionable. Indeed, the accounts of the early lives of the female pirates Anne Bonny and Mary Read are certainly dubious, regardless of Johnson's protestation that 'the Truth of it can be no more contested, than that there were such Men in the World, as *Roberts* and *Black-beard*, who were Pyrates'.[26] Johnson also gives another dubious account of an incident in which Edward Teach, without provocation, shot at two members of his crew; permanently laming one of them as a result.[27] Although the truth of such an account is unlikely, Johnson uses it to evidence Blackbeard's 'savage Humours'.[28] These humours are part of a sensational description in which Johnson makes the pirate captain seem every bit a 'Devil incarnate'.[29] He describes his beard as one which, 'like a frightful Meteor, covered his whole Face, and frightened America more than any Comet that has appeared there'.[30] He claims that Teach 'was accustomed to twist it with Ribbons, in small Tails … and turn them about

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[24] Neil Rennie, *Treasure Neverland* (Oxford, 2013), p. vi.
[25] Ibid. p. 78.
[26] Defoe, *General History*, p. 153.
[27] Ibid. p. 84.
[28] Ibid. p. 84.
[29] Ibid. p. 85.
[30] Ibid. p. 84.

his Ears'.[31] According to Johnson, Teach also had a touch of the theatrical about him, as he would place 'lighted Matches under his Hat, which appearing on each Side of his Face, his Eyes naturally looking fierce and wild, made him altogether such a Figure, that Imagination cannot form an Idea of a Fury, from Hell, to look more frightful'.[32] Such a sensationalised mix of fact and fiction, it can be argued, was deliberate in order to make the book more exciting, and therefore more entertaining, and ultimately more saleable. Whatever the reason may be however, this combination has had a huge influence on popular culture, and on the formation of the modern day image of the pirate.

Johnson's *History* has provided inspiration for some of the most well-known and well-loved pirate fiction. Johnson's account of the life of the Scottish pirate John Smith, alias Gow, provided the inspiration for Sir Walter Scott's *The Pirate*, published in 1821.[33] Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, which was first serialised in *Young Folks* magazine between 1881 and 1882 before being published as a book a year later, owed much of its factual information to Johnson's *History*, while also contributing its own fictional inventions to pirate myth such as the treasure map.[34] Captain Hook and the other pirates which featured in J. M. Barrie's 1904 stage play *Peter Pan*, and also in the book version published in 1911 under the title of *Peter and Wendy*, were also influenced by Johnson's work.[35] Rennie, however, contests this influence, arguing that 'Barrie's pirates are more fictional than historical, as the jesting references to *Treasure Island* plainly demonstrate'.[36] But as *Treasure Island* was in itself influenced by the work of Johnson, such references therefore indicate that *Peter Pan* contained Johnson's influence by proxy.

As the twentieth century progressed, the influence of Johnson's *History* continued with the growth of the American film industry. Pirates became the iconic, dashing, swashbuckling heroes of Hollywood films,

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[31] Ibid. p. 84.
[32] Ibid. pp. 84 – 85.
[33] Cordingly, 'Introduction', in Johnson, *General History*, p. viii.
[34] Ibid. pp. viii – ix.
[35] David Cordingly, *Life Among the Pirates: The Romance and the Reality* (London, 1999), pp. 32 – 33, 322.
[36] Rennie, *Neverland*, p. 198.

played by actors such as Douglas Fairbanks and Errol Flynn. For these fictional pirate films, like their literary counterparts, historical accuracy was not the main priority. In the creation of fantastic adventures, filmmakers used elements of Johnson's *History*, without questioning its accuracy, and supplemented this with their own brand of Hollywood fabrication.[37] The popularity of such films has ensured that this trend has continued into the twenty-first century, with films such as the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series, starring Johnny Depp as the fictional pirate Captain Jack Sparrow, and co-starring Ian McShane as a representation of the real pirate Edward Teach. Thus Johnson's influence can clearly be seen in popular culture, and with the constant development of entertainment technology, it is showing no signs of waning. The Johnson-influenced pirates of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries have featured in numerous popular video games; the latest addition is 2013's *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag*, a game with an extremely far-fetched plot which combines fact with fiction.

Johnson's *History* has therefore been the inspiration for numerous tales which have mixed fact with fiction, and have glamorised the pirates of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Such tales have been responsible for transforming the image of the pirate from that of a base criminal, to that of a daring, and glamorous rebel; a classic swashbuckling hero of contemporary popular culture. Thus the term 'golden age' may well be explained by this modern day perception of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century piracy. Through the prism of popular culture, the period has become a 'golden age' of piracy; a period of sensational adventures, in which the violence has been diluted, and the atrocities played down.

While such explanations certainly seem reasonable, there is nevertheless a third possible explanation for the term golden age. The term may refer to a period in which the nature of piracy changed significantly. Free from the constraints of conventional society, the pirates of this period constructed their own social world; a world with their own customs and values, and one in which they governed themselves. This was therefore a criminal society based on a radical ideal; an alternative egalitarian existence

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[37] Cordingly, 'Introduction', in Johnson, *General History*, p. ix.

in which the pirates became the masters of their own destiny. Indeed, the pirates of this period were masterless men, free from the bonds of land-based society, and its system of hierarchy.[38] Thus for many, the decision to turn pirate was the decision to take control of their lives. In this sense then, the term golden age may refer to the pirates themselves; it was their golden age; a period in which significant social and cultural developments ensured that piracy had become more than just maritime predation for fiscal gain, it had become a source of empowerment.

Although socially and culturally significant, the development of this alternative society had received little attention within the historiography of piracy until the latter decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, after Johnson's *History* the genre of golden age piracy, as a whole, received little attention until the end of the nineteenth century. In 1892, S. C. Hughson bemoaned this lack of scholarly interest in an article published in *The Sewanee Review*. Hughson stated that 'few phases of American history … have been so persistently neglected as that of the exploits of the pirates during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and of their depredations on the … colonies'.[39] Furthermore, Hughson argued that the 'few historians who have condescended to touch the subject at all, have not considered it of sufficient importance to warrant any original research, but have consented in every instance to the use of second-hand materials, and the result has been … repeated errors'.[40] This article, titled *Early Piracy and Colonial Commerce*, was thus Hughson's attempt to redress both the omissions and the flaws in the historiography. This study, which drew on information gleaned from various colonial statutes, records and reports relating to North and South Carolina, was followed by another in 1893, titled *The Death-Struggles of Colonial Piracy*. This second article, it should be noted, contains possibly the first ever reference to the 'golden age of

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[38] Marcus Rediker, "Under the Banner of King Death": The Social World of Anglo-American Pirates, 1716 to 1726', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 38, No. 2 (1981), pp. 203 – 227.
[39] S. C. Hughson, 'Early Piracy and Colonial Commerce', *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1892), pp. 52 – 62.
[40] Ibid. pp. 52 – 62.

piracy'.[41] It could therefore be argued that this term originates from Hughson in the nineteenth century, and not from Rafael Sabatini in the 1920s, as A. Konstam and D. Rickman have argued.[42]

Within these articles, Hughson focused on the collusion between pirates and corrupt colonial officials, the ramifications of the Navigation Acts, and the effect that both of these factors had on English and colonial commerce. The focus of these articles was therefore economic, rather than social and cultural, and as such, they foreshadowed a trend which remained prominent within the historiography until the latter half of the twentieth century. This trend explored acts of maritime depredation, and their effect on commerce, while largely neglecting the social and cultural developments which took place amongst the pirates of this era. Indeed, in Gosse's 1932 publication, *The History of Piracy*, he too, acknowledged the relationship between piracy and the Navigation Acts, and also recognised that mass unemployment in the aftermath of the War of the Spanish Succession contributed to an increase in piracy, as out-of-work sailors, skilled in predation, took to the seas to earn a living through plunder.[43] However, there is no real, and credible mention of an alternative radical society, or the causes of such. Thus the trend continued, but by the 1950s the focus began to broaden, as the historiography of piracy began to recognise that the increase in piracy was also connected to the social experience of the common sailor.

In *Piracy was a Business*, published in 1953, Cyrus H. Karraker described the business of piracy, and the collusion between the pirates and the colonial officials that sustained this business, as a form of racketeering that pre-dated that of the bootleggers and numbers racketeers. However, rather than focus solely on the economics of this criminal enterprise, Karraker also looked into the origin of those who became pirates. According to Karraker these people were 'social outcasts'.[44] These 'outcasts' were a mixture of sailors who were struggling to find work in

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[41] S. C. Hughson, 'The Death-Struggles of Colonial Piracy', *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1893), pp. 194 – 206.
[42] A. Konstam and D. Rickman, *Pirate: The Golden Age* (Oxford, 2011), p. 4.
[43] Gosse, *The History of Piracy*, pp. 176 – 177.
[44] Cyrus H. Karraker, *Piracy was a Business* (Rindge, 1953), p. 228.

peacetime, 'poverty-stricken farm labourers, town apprentices, and domestic servants'.[45] Karraker thus recognised, like other historians before him, that unemployment and poverty were economic factors that contributed to an increase in piracy. However, Karraker touched upon another causal factor; 'the brutal treatment of seamen, both on merchant ships and warships'.[46] This reference to the social experience of the seaman, although brief, nevertheless signalled a change in the historiography of golden age piracy. Indeed, in Rankin's *The Golden Age of Piracy*, published in 1969, the author acknowledged that the social existence of the ordinary seaman made piratical life an attractive option. He argued that 'A merchant seaman lived a brutal life. Discipline was … cruel … Food was poor … Wages were low and the voyages long. Life as a pirate, on the other hand, promised adventure, gold, and a good life, although perhaps a short one'.[47] This argument was further supported in Botting's *The Pirates*, published in 1978. Botting stated that 'What made some men turn to piracy lay in the nature of their life at sea. A common grievance among sailors was the harshness of discipline on board merchant and Navy ships'.[48]

The importance of the social existence of the seaman was thus now being recognised within the historiography of golden age piracy. This recognition led to a greater scrutiny of the seaman's social existence, and of the conditions which dictated this existence. As such the historiography began to explore the social standing of the sailor, and found that this was largely responsible for the treatment he received. Botting explained that the golden age period 'was a time of gross social and economic injustice in which the lower classes, be they sailors or landsmen, were considered little more than slaves to despotic masters'.[49] The ordinary seaman of low-class origin could therefore be viewed as a victim of class oppression, and the causes of piracy, and piracy itself, could thus be viewed within this social context. Indeed, this theme of class oppression, and its ramifications for the

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[45] Ibid. p. 228.
[46] Ibid. p. 227.
[47] Rankin, *The Golden Age*, p. 22.
[48] Botting, *The Pirates*, p. 29.
[49] Ibid. p. 31.

social and cultural nature of golden age piracy, began to take centre stage in the works of the social historian Marcus Rediker.

In *Under the Banner of King Death: The Social World of Anglo-American Pirates, 1716 to 1726*, published in 1981, Rediker explored the social and cultural developments which took place amongst pirates during this period. Focusing on the social organisation of the pirate ship, the relations between pirates, and the collective consciousness they displayed through their acts, language and symbolism, Rediker argued that pirates created an alternative egalitarian existence which challenged social norms. As Botting had explained three years earlier, the period was a time of social and economic injustice, dictated by an authoritative and hierarchical system in which power rested in the hands of the wealthy minority, and the labouring poor were largely powerless, and suffered as a consequence.[50] Rediker argued that this system was represented and enforced at sea by the merchant captain and the royal official; individuals who exercised power and brutal control over the masses of labouring seamen. He thus argued that by turning pirate and creating a society based on egalitarian governance, the seaman, as pirate, deliberately challenged this system. Piracy, according to Rediker, could therefore be viewed as a violent form of criminal protest against an oppressive and unjust class system. Indeed, he argued that piracy in this period was akin to social banditry, as defined by Eric Hobsbawm, and attacks on merchant shipping, and violence against merchant captains were therefore acts of revenge against the oppressive rich.[51]

Thus Rediker had introduced themes of class conflict and social revolution into the study of golden age piracy; themes which he continued to focus on in *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700 – 1750*, published in 1987, *Life Under the Jolly Roger*, published in 1988, *When Women Pirates Sailed the Seas*, published in 1993, and *Villains of All Nations*, published in 2004. This contribution has ensured that since the 1980's, Rediker's views have become firmly embedded within the historiography of golden age

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[50] Ibid. p. 31.
[51] Rediker, "Under the Banner of King Death", pp. 203 – 227.

piracy. Furthermore, Rediker's work has influenced the contributions made by others. Thus in *Pirates and Privateers of the Caribbean*, published in 1992, Marx described the pirates of this period as 'social anarchists who threatened bourgeois morality and order, … were passionate about their individual liberty and practiced a system of pirate democracy'.[52] In *Life Among the Pirates: The Romance and the Reality*, first published in 1995, Cordingly made extensive use of Rediker's *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, and thus acknowledged a debt to this work. However, despite such influence, Rediker's views have not gone completely unchallenged.

In *The Pirate Wars*, published in 2004, Earle, while using and agreeing with information gleaned from Rediker's work, nevertheless found fault in it, and indeed, in the work of social historians as a whole. Thus, while he agreed with Rediker's viewpoint on certain aspects of piracy, such as the relations between pirates and people of African descent, he also argued that Rediker and other social historians are guilty of infusing their work with fantasy, and of seeking to emphasise radicalism, as a result of their own radical persuasion.[53] Rediker's emphasis on the radical nature of piracy has also been challenged by Peter T. Leeson in *The Invisible Hook: The Hidden Economics of Pirates*, published in 2009. Leeson, while acknowledging that class conflict and social revolution may have been factors which motivated some sailors to turn pirate, nevertheless argued that 'most sailors who became pirates did so for a more familiar reason: money'.[54] However, notwithstanding such challenges, the importance of Rediker's work should not be understated. It has brought the social and cultural development of an alternative and egalitarian piratical society to the fore of the historiography, and the arguments it continues to trigger are testament to its ongoing relevance within the genre. Indeed, it is the development of this piratical society, and the question of just how socially and culturally alternative this society actually was, that is the focus of this thesis.

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[52] Marx, *Pirates and Privateers*, p. 9.
[53] Earle, *Pirate Wars*, pp. 3 – 4, 130, 172.
[54] Leeson, *The Invisible Hook*, p. 11.

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This thesis will argue that an alternative piratical society, with its own unique social order, and its own unique culture, did indeed exist. The formation of this society took place within the latter stages of piracy's golden age, from around 1700 to 1726; the years of Atlantic piracy, as defined by Baer and Rediker.[55] This thesis therefore explores the social and cultural developments which culminated in the formation of this society during these years, and also identifies just how alternative this society actually was. In doing so, it compares and contrasts this alternative piratical society with conventional land-based society of the period. Furthermore, as the development of this alternative piratical society was in many ways connected to the social and cultural experience of the sailor, the social world of the sailor is also explored, as is the development of seafaring preceding the golden age.

Although approximately a quarter of these pirates originated from the British West Indies and Britain's North American colonies, the pirates of these years were predominantly of British origin, with almost half originating from England.[56] Thus when comparing the pirate's society with land-based society, the comparison is made with that of England, with particular emphasis being placed on London, as it was the centre of the empire. However, as many of these early eighteenth-century pirates had previously laboured aboard merchant vessels involved in the colonial trade, when this thesis explores the development of seafaring it will necessarily be within an Anglo-American context, and not just an English one. Thus when the social and cultural experience of the seaman is explored, it is the experience of Anglo-American seamen that is dealt with; the social experience of sailors hailing not just from English ports such as London, Bristol, and the bourgeoning port of Liverpool, but also from the colonial ports of New England.

The thesis is separated into two main parts, with an entr'acte bridging them. As the development of an alternative piratical society was in many

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[55] Baer, *British Isles*, pp. 16 – 17; Rediker, *Villains*, pp. 8 – 9.
[56] Ibid. pp. 51 – 52.

ways influenced by the social existence of the sailor, the first part of the thesis explores the world of the maritime labourer. The first chapter is context, and deals with the expansion of the English Empire into the Americas, and the growth of its overseas colonial trade; a growth which created a new social existence for the sailor. The second chapter then deals with this new existence, and the social and cultural ramifications it had for the sailor. This first part is followed by an entr'acte which deals with the causes of piracy, and illustrates the sailor's transition from maritime labourer to maritime outlaw. The second part of the thesis then deals with the alternative society of the pirate. The first chapter of this part deals with the creation of the pirate's alternative social order, and the second chapter deals with the pirate's alternative culture.

In order to create a valid argument this thesis is necessarily based on evidence gathered through extensive research of primary sources. Contemporary British and colonial newspapers and journals, such as *The Boston News-Letter*, *The Boston Gazette*, *The Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post*, and *The British Journal* have been used, as has various contemporary printed accounts of pirate trials, such as *The Tryals of Major Stede Bonnet, and other Pirates* published in 1719, and *The Trials of Eight Persons Indited for Piracy &c. Of whom Two were Acquitted, and the Rest found Guilty* published in 1718. William Snelgrave's *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave-Trade*, published in 1734, has also been used as it gives a detailed account of the author's time spent as a pirate captive. Information has also been gleaned from correspondence between officials in the Americas and the Council of Trade and Plantations. Johnson's *History*, has also been used, as although it contains a great deal of sensationalism, it still contains a great deal of factual information which can be corroborated with other contemporary sources of evidence.

The use of such primary sources, along with others not mentioned here, has ensured that the argument put forward by this thesis is based on a solid foundation of credible evidence. Of course, many secondary sources have also been used in the creation of this thesis. Nevertheless, the thesis is suffused with primary evidence, and its use corroborates a great deal of the information gleaned from the secondary sources. As such,

this thesis is predominantly based on credible evidence, which serves as proof that the radical and alternative society of the pirate is far from fantasy.

Part A: The Sub-Culture of the Maritime Labourer

Context

The development of the eighteenth-century pirate's alternative social existence was inextricably linked with that of the ordinary sailor. Nearly all the pirates of this era shared the same seafaring origin; they had previously laboured aboard merchant, naval or privateering vessels, and some may have had experience of life aboard all three.[57] Indeed, sailors would often work aboard any type of vessel, moving from one trade to another, depending on opportunity, and the wages offered.[58] In times of peace, the sailor viewed the naval ship just as he viewed the merchant ship; as a source of employment.[59] However, this view changed in times of war, as merchant vessels offered greater pay incentives to compensate for the possibility of being attacked, and the Navy resorted to impressment in order to remedy the manning problems it experienced.[60] Nevertheless, in peace-time, there was little to differentiate between merchant seamen and Navy seamen. They were, as Nicholas Rodger explains, 'simply seamen working at the moment for one particular employer'.[61]

Such adaptability was nothing new to the English sailor; indeed, there had long been a considerable overlap within English seafaring. Privately owned vessels had often been employed to 'keep the seas' in the absence of a permanent navy, and even when a standing fleet of fighting ships was established, toward the end of Henry VIII's reign, its small size ensured that private vessels would continue to play a major role in the

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[57] Marcus Rediker, "Under the Banner of King Death": The Social World of Anglo-American Pirates, 1716 to 1726', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 38, No. 2 (1981), p. 206.
[58] Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700 – 1750* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 116 – 117; N. A. M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London, 1988), p. 113.
[59] Ibid. p. 113.
[60] Peter Earle, *Sailors: English Merchant Seamen, 1650 – 1775* (London, 1998), pp. 188 – 190; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, pp. 32 – 33.
[61] Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 113.

defence of the realm.[62] For example, in late-Tudor England the 'royal navy … was not entirely distinct and separate from the merchant marine'.[63] Indeed, M. Oppenheim states that in the reign of Elizabeth I, 'the fighting ship was not yet strikingly differentiated from the armed merchantman, and the merchant vessel was fitted not only for trade but for action'.[64] The eighteenth-century sailor's predecessor was therefore just as likely to adapt his seafaring skill and know-how to suit both situational, and occupational, need. However, notwithstanding this similarity, the eighteenth-century sailor's life differed markedly from his seafaring predecessors. Indeed, the expansion of the English Empire into the Americas, and the growth of its overseas colonial trade, based on a rising demand for colonial produce such as sugar and tobacco, fundamentally changed the nature of seafaring life. As the consumer demand for colonial produce grew, the colonies, in order to meet this demand, made the transition from using white indentured servants as their chief source of labour, to enslaved Africans; a more productive and cost effective labour force. These changes necessarily resulted in an increase in merchant shipping; both for the import and export of colonial commodities, and also for the transportation of enslaved Africans to the colonies; and it also meant that an increasing number of seamen were needed to work aboard these vessels. The result was a mass influx of the working class into maritime employment; the creation of a seafaring proletariat, whose labour powered the capitalist growth of England's colonial mercantilism.

Vast numbers of ordinary seamen were thus now employed in long distance colonial trade, spending considerable periods of time at sea, and living within an environment which significantly altered their social and cultural existence to the extent that, by the eighteenth century, they were viewed almost as a separate entity by their land-based contemporaries.

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[62] Susan Rose, 'Hawley, John, the elder (*c*. 1350 – 1408)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004 – 2014) http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/50130 (accessed 19 March 2014; hereafter cited as Rose, 'Hawley', *ODNB*.); N. A. M. Rodger, *The Safeguard of the Sea: A Naval History of Britain, 660 – 1649* (London, 2004), p. 221; Kenneth R. Andrews, *Trade, plunder and settlement: Maritime enterprise and the genesis of the British Empire, 1480 – 1630* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 25.
[63] Ibid. p. 26.
[64] M. Oppenheim, 'The Royal and Merchant Navy under Elizabeth', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 6, No. 23 (1891), p. 467.

Indeed, in many ways the sailor was culturally alien to the rest of society; a product of his seafaring existence. This existence had significant ramifications for the nature of piracy, as the seaman's social and cultural experience heavily influenced the world he created for himself once he turned pirate. Thus the growth of England's overseas colonial trade created conditions which ultimately led to the creation of the pirate's alternative society. It is therefore necessary to give an explanation of this growth, in order to be able to contextualise the social and cultural existence of the sailor, and its subsequent ramifications for the nature of piracy.

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Prior to this colonial expansion into the Americas, then, overseas trade had already been making a contribution to the English economy for some time. In the early fifteenth century, English fishing vessels were in Icelandic waters, thus demonstrating that 'the country already possessed the ships, seamen and navigational skills needed for the regular conduct of difficult and dangerous voyages'.[65] English vessels were also commercially active within the Mediterranean from the late fourteenth century, exchanging cloth for bullion, which was in turn exchanged for luxury goods such as Aegean wine, spices, and silk.[66] This trade increased further in the late fifteenth century, when England's economy began to recover after the Wars of the Roses, making such luxuries more affordable.[67] Indeed, it was the pursuit of such luxury commodities which spurred John Cabot's search for a new route to the Orient.[68] In 1496 Henry VII granted the Bristol-based Venetian navigator authorisation to search for new lands overseas to occupy and set up trade with.[69] The following year Cabot, possibly joined by his son, Sebastian, set sail from Bristol in search of the Far East, and in finding land which he believed to be China, unwittingly discovered mainland

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[65] G. V. Scammell, *The World Encompassed: The first European maritime empires, c. 800 – 1650* (London, 1981), pp. 7, 460.
[66] Ibid. p. 460.
[67] Ibid. p. 460.
[68] Roger Lockyer, *Tudor and Stuart Britain, 1485 – 1714* (3rd edn., Harlow, 2005), p. 146.
[69] Andrews, *Trade, plunder and settlement*, p. 44.

North America.[70] Although this search for a route to the Orient was unsuccessful, it was not to be the final attempt. Indeed, the search was to be resurrected by Sebastian Cabot in the early 1550s.

The most important aspect of England's commercial activity was its cloth exports to mainland Europe, via the commercial *entrepôt* of Antwerp.[71] Kenneth R. Andrews states that 'English cloth exports doubled in quantity between the 1470s and about 1550, approaching in the peak years a value of nearly a million pounds sterling'.[72] London became the most dominant port concerned with this trade, and although a large part of it was controlled and regulated by the English Merchant Adventurers Company, a significant portion was controlled by merchants from the Hanseatic League of north Germany.[73] As such, much of the export trade was carried to mainland Europe in foreign vessels.[74] However, during the reign of Edward VI, this export trade began to suffer. Overproduction had saturated the European market, and by 1552 English cloth exports to Antwerp had fallen by thirty-five per cent.[75] This decline spurred a search for new overseas markets, and in early 1553, under the governorship of Sebastian Cabot, a China Company was established.[76] This was a joint-stock company of over two hundred shareholders; amongst them London merchants, government officials, and royal courtiers, who would share in both the risk, and expense, of overseas ventures.[77] Later that same year, with the support of this company, Hugh Willoughby and Richard Chancellor set sail in search of a

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[70] Ibid. pp. 44 – 47; David B. Quinn, 'Cabot, John [Zuan Caboto] (*c.* 1451 – 1498)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004 – 2014) http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/66135 (accessed 29 May 2014; hereafter cited as Quinn, 'Cabot, John', *ODNB.*); David Loades, 'Cabot, Sebastian (c. 1481/2 – 1557)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004 – 2014) http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4290 (accessed 29 May 2014; hereafter cited as Loades, 'Cabot, Sebastian', *ODNB.*)
[71] Martin Rorke, 'English and Scottish Overseas Trade, 1300 – 1600', *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 59, No. 2 (2006), pp. 273 – 275, 279 – 280.
[72] Andrews, *Trade, plunder and settlement*, p. 6.
[73] Ibid. pp. 6 – 7; Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age: England, 1603 – 1714* (3rd edn., Harlow, 2003), p. 24.
[74] Ibid. p. 24; Andrews, *Trade, plunder and settlement*, p. 7.
[75] Steven Sarson, *British America, 1500 – 1800: Creating Colonies, Imagining an Empire* (London, 2005), p. 13; Lockyer, *Tudor and Stuart Britain*, p. 146; Scammell, *World Encompassed*, p. 463.
[76] Loades, 'Cabot, Sebastian', *ODNB*; Scammell, *World Encompassed*, pp. 463, 472; Sarson, *British America*, p. 13.
[77] Loades, 'Cabot, Sebastian', *ODNB*; Scammell, *World Encompassed*, p. 472; Sarson, *British America*, p. 13.

Northeast route to the Orient.[78] The expedition, however, failed to reach its destination. The fleet was dispersed during a storm off the coast of Norway, with Willoughby sailing east to Novaya Zemlya where he perished.[79] Despite this, Chancellor managed to sail into the White Sea and made his way to Moscow, opening up trade with Russia which led to Cabot's joint-stock company being granted a charter; eventually becoming known as the Muscovy Company.[80]

This Russian trade flourished, and although between 1553 and 1575, English overseas commercial activity was sporadic, the latter decades of Tudor monarchy nevertheless proved to be an important period in England's commercial expansion.[81] Following the Muscovy Company, more joint-stock companies were established to invest in overseas trade, such as the Guinea Company in 1555, the Eastland Company in 1579, the Levant Company in 1592, and the East India Company in 1600.[82] The Hanseatic merchants were also ousted from London in 1597, which not only resulted in English merchants gaining a greater share of English trade, but also in an increase in English merchant shipping.[83] In assessing this period, Theodore K. Rabb explains that during the reign of Elizabeth I, 'merchants had begun to open new markets in the Levant, in the Baltic, and in Russia. They were financing the first steps towards England's ultimately dominant position in Atlantic trade: the first tentative moves into Africa, and into South and North America'.[84] It was also, as Appleby notes, a time when 'plunder merged with aggressive commercial ambitions and ventures, especially in new, long-distance enterprises'.[85]

Motivated by the financial rewards which could be gained through plunder and maritime predation, men such as John Hawkins, Francis Drake,

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[78] Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 191; Lockyer, *Tudor and Stuart Britain*, p. 146; Scammell, *World Encompassed*, p. 472; Loades, 'Cabot, Sebastian', *ODNB.*

[79] Scammell, *World Encompassed*, p. 472.

[80] Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 191; Lockyer, *Tudor and Stuart Britain*, pp. 146 – 147; Scammell, *World Encompassed*, p. 472; Loades, 'Cabot, Sebastian', *ODNB.*

[81] Lockyer, *Tudor and Stuart Britain*, p. 146; Theodore K. Rabb, 'Investment in English Overseas Enterprise, 1575 – 1630', *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1966), pp. 71 – 72.

[82] Sarson, *British America*, p. 13.

[83] Coward, *The Stuart Age*, p. 25.

[84] Rabb, 'Investment in English Overseas Enterprise', p. 77.

[85] John C. Appleby, *Under The Bloody Flag: Pirates of the Tudor Age* (Stroud, 2009), p. 14.

and Walter Raleigh began to forcibly encroach upon Spain's colonial trade, embark upon armed raids into the Spanish main, and make attempts to set up a North American colony which could be used as a base to launch attacks on Spanish treasure fleets. Such a direct challenge to Spanish hegemony in the Americas was not only viewed as a challenge to Spain's wealth, and its established commercial interests, but also, set against a background of ever-increasing religious tension, a Protestant challenge to Imperial Catholicism.[86] Indeed, in the reign of Elizabeth I, fear and suspicion of the increasing power of Catholic Spain manifested itself in a belief in catholic conspiracy theories. Rumours were circulated in court of a Spanish plan for the eradication of Protestantism, and an invasion of England in which Elizabeth would be deposed, and subsequently replaced by Mary, Queen of Scots.[87] Set against this backdrop of fear and paranoia, aggressive encroachment therefore had more than just a financial purpose. By interloping on Spanish trade, and thus challenging Spanish hegemony, the English believed that they were advancing a necessary Protestant challenge to Catholic domination.

Thus, during the 1560's John Hawkins, England's first major slave trader, embarked on three voyages which combined trade with depredation. In addition to the plunder of Spanish settlements, Hawkins breached the Spanish monopoly on trade with its colonies by transporting human cargo and other goods between Africa and the Spanish Caribbean.[88] The final of these three voyages ended with a six-hour battle against a Spanish fleet at San Juan de Ulúa, on the coast of Mexico, in which Hawkins conceded a crushing defeat.[89] This defeat exacerbated the existing hostility between England and Spain, and spurred reprisal attacks against the Spanish in the following years.[90] A prominent figure of these reprisals was Francis Drake, one of the survivors of the defeat at San Juan de Ulúa, who exacted his

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[86] L. P. Jackson, 'Elizabethan Seamen and the African Slave Trade', *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1924), pp. 5, 16.

[87] Malcolm R. Thorp, 'Catholic Conspiracy in Early Elizabethan Foreign Policy', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (1984), pp. 431, 436 – 437, 441 – 448.

[88] Sarson, *British America*, p. 14.

[89] Basil Morgan, 'Hawkins, Sir John (1532 – 1595)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004 – 2014) http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12672 (accessed 18 Feb 2014)

[90] Sarson, *British America*, p. 14.

revenge by 'sailing through the Straits of Magellan, robbing heavily laden Spanish vessels along the Pacific Coast'.[91] Drake fused this sea robbery with exploration.[92] In 1577 he set off an a voyage in which he became the first Englishman to successfully circumnavigate the world, while also claiming territory on the western coast of North America, and raiding Callao and Lima along the way.[93] This predation, although seemingly piratical, assumed the form of licensed depredation.[94]

Licensed depredation had long been established as a way in which merchants could recoup the losses sustained from attacks on their ships and cargo by the subjects of foreign nations. From the thirteenth century the Crown had issued licences in the form of 'letters of reprisal' which enabled the merchant, who could not find redress in the courts of the offending nation, to seek compensation by recouping the equivalent of his losses through reprisal attacks on the shipping, or ports, of that nation.[95] These letters of reprisal, known as 'letters of marque', were issued in times of peace, and therefore a distinction needs to be made between these and the 'letters of marque' which would later be issued by the Admiralty Court in times of war. This later 'letter of marque', which was issued in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, allowed ships under private ownership to prey on enemy vessels in times of war. Once prizes were taken, and after the Admiralty Court had deemed them to be enemy ships, they could then be sold for a profit.[96] Rodger states that 'This, the classic form of privateering, could by definition be practised only in wartime, while in theory letters of reprisal could be issued only in peacetime'.[97]

Given this distinction, it may appear somewhat confusing that the reprisals and counter-reprisals which followed in the wake of Hawkins defeat at San Juan de Ulúa are often referred to as acts of privateering.[98] Rodger thus argues that it 'is usual and convenient to talk of Elizabethan

[91] J. Leitch Wright, Jr, 'Sixteenth Century English-Spanish Rivalry in La Florida', *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (1960), p. 273.
[92] Sarson, *British America*, p. 14.
[93] Ibid. p. 14.
[94] Philip Gosse, *The History of Piracy* (New York, 1932), p. viii.
[95] Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 128.
[96] Ibid. pp. 128, 199 – 200.
[97] Ibid. p. 200.
[98] Sarson, *British America*, p. 14.

'privateering', but the word is strictly anachronistic, for it was only coined in the seventeenth century'.[99] Furthermore, at this point England and Spain were not in a state of open war. Nevertheless, Rodger does concede that in 'sixteenth-century practice, however, 'peace' might very often mean undeclared war'.[100] Indeed, it can be argued that the two nations were embroiled in an undeclared war, and the reprisals which followed in the wake of Hawkins' defeat at San Juan de Ulúa were, therefore, conducted in a fashion that exceeded the accepted norms of the thirteenth-century letters of marque, thus resembling the practice which would later be termed privateering. It is therefore understandable why these acts of reprisal are often referred to as such.

It was during this period of reprisal attacks, and increasing Anglo-Spanish hostility that 'the first pamphlets advocating colonization in North America had appeared, including Richard Hakluyt, the younger's *Divers voyages touching the discoverie of America* in 1582'.[101] Hakluyt, along with his elder cousin, also named Richard Hakluyt, advocated the colonisation of America based on the commercial and economic benefits that such colonies would have for England. The Hakluyts believed that the colonies would provide England with a dependable source of staple produce, in exchange for English commodities and people.[102] Furthermore, they would provide luxury goods such as wine, silk, sugar, and spices, thus making England no longer reliant on expensive imports from other nations.[103] These ideas were circulated amongst like-minded advocates of American colonialism such as Sir Humphrey Gilbert, and his half-brother, Walter Raleigh, and attempts at colonisation were soon being made, albeit unsuccessfully.[104]

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[99] Rodger, *Safeguard*, p. 199.
[100] Ibid. p. 201.
[101] David Beers Quinn, Richard Hakluyt, Editor: with facsimiles of Richard Hakluyt, *Divers Voyages Touching the Discoverie of America* (1582), and *A Journal of Several Voyages into New France* (1580), 2 vols. (Amersterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1967), cited in David Beers Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke: Voyages and Colonies, 1584 – 1606* (North Carolina, 1985), p. 8.
[102] Carville Earle, 'Pioneers of Providence: The Anglo-American Experience, 1492 – 1792', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 82, No. 3 (1992), pp. 478 – 499.
[103] Ibid. pp. 478 – 499.
[104] Anthony Payne, 'Hakluyt, Richard (1552? – 1616)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004 – 2014) http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11892 (accessed 3 June 2014; hereafter cited as Payne, 'Hakluyt', *ODNB*.); Rory Rapple, 'Gilbert, Sir Humphrey (1537 – 1583)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004 – 2014)

In 1583 Gilbert's attempted colonisation of Newfoundland ended in disaster. After sailing into St. John's harbour carrying letters patent, Gilbert quashed opposition from the local fishermen, and claimed the harbour and surrounding land, only to perish at sea during the return voyage.[105] In 1585, the recently knighted Sir Walter Raleigh financed an attempt to colonise Roanoke Island off the coast of modern day North Carolina. While the Hakluyts' commercial and economic vision certainly had a part to play in Raleigh's overall grand plan for an American colony, his major motivation for the colonisation of Roanoke was the establishment of a base which could be used to launch attacks on the Spanish. J. Leitch Wright Jr. argues that Roanoke, 'at least in the beginning, would be little more than a fortified port, allowing English corsairs to prey more easily on the plate fleet, providing them a year round base in the New World, and reimbursing the backers with rich Spanish prizes'.[106] Raleigh thus sent approximately one hundred males to Roanoke under the command of Captain Ralph Lane.[107] However, due to a combination of a lack of supplies, a reluctance to engage in farming, and Lane's attacks on the Native Americans who had provided their only dependable food source, the attempted settlement ended in failure.[108] In 1586, when Francis Drake unexpectedly arrived with supplies after plundering in the Spanish Caribbean, the starving colonists abandoned Roanoke and returned to England with him.[109] Undeterred by this, however, Raleigh sent another group of colonists to North America the following year, this time a mixture of men, women and children, under the leadership of John White. On this occasion, the intended plan was to establish an agricultural colony at Chesapeake Bay, but instead they were dropped off at

http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10690 (accessed 3 June 2014; herafter cited as Rapple, 'Gilbert', *ODNB*.); Mark Nicholls, Penry Williams, 'Ralegh, Sir Walter (1554 – 1618)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004 – 2014) http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23039 (accessed 4 June 2014; hereafter cited as Nicholls, Williams, 'Ralegh', *ODNB*.)

[105] Rapple, 'Gilbert', *ODNB*.

[106] Leitch Wright Jr., 'Sixteenth Century English-Spanish Rivalry', p. 273.

[107] Nicholls, Williams, 'Ralegh', *ODNB*; *Oxford Dictionary of World History* (2nd edn., New York, 2006), p. 543; Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (London, 2002), pp. 123 – 124; Sarson, *British America*, p. 15.

[108] Taylor, *American Colonies*, p. 124; Sarson, *British America*, p. 15.

[109] Taylor, *American Colonies*, p. 124; Sarson, *British America*, pp. 15 – 16.

Roanoke by a ship eager to pursue plunder in Caribbean waters.[110] Again, the colonists were faced with a lack of supplies, forcing White to travel back to England for assistance, leaving behind his granddaughter, 'Virginia Dare, the first English child born in North America'.[111] However, due to English shipping being embroiled in the conflict with the Spanish Armada, White was unable to return to Roanoke until 1590. On his return the colonists had vanished, leaving the words 'Croatoan', and 'Cro' carved into a doorpost, and a tree.[112]

Although these initial attempts had ended in failure, the English were not to be deterred from settling the region which Raleigh had named 'Virginia' to honour his virtuous queen.[113] Indeed, during the early years of King James I's reign, interest in colonising Virginia had been rekindled. After the King had made peace with Spain in 1604, merchant capital which had previously been invested in war was now channelled into colonisation, resulting in the formation of the Virginia Company, and the grant of a royal charter in 1606.[114] This charter authorised the Virginia Company to settlement and governance of the region, and by 1607 the first North American colony had been established at Jamestown; named in honour of the King.[115] Throughout the seventeenth century, English settlement in the New World continued; its colonies and plantations feeding the commercial and economic growth of the burgeoning English Empire. In 1612 the Virginia Company was granted further authorisation for the settlement of Bermuda, which had been discovered in 1609.[116] Appleby states that within a decade of its settlement, Bermuda 'had been carved up into extensive tobacco plantations'.[117] Indeed, tobacco quickly became the staple of mainland Virginia, the Bermuda islands, and also Maryland, after being

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[110] Ibid. p. 16.
[111] Ibid. p. 16.
[112] Ibid. p. 16.
[113] Ibid. p. 15.
[114] Andrews, *Trade, plunder and settlement*, p. 252; Taylor, *American Colonies*, p. 129 – 130.
[115] Ibid. p. 130.
[116] J. H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492 – 1830* (New Haven and London, 2007), p. 103; John C. Appleby, 'War, Politics, and Colonization, 1558 – 1625', in Nicholas Canny (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume 1: The Origins of Empire* (New York, 1998), p. 74.
[117] Ibid. p. 74.

settled in 1634.[118] Sarson estimates that 'Within four years of settlement, Marylanders exported 100,000 pounds of tobacco and in 1640 the two Chesapeake colonies exported 1,000,000 pounds'.[119] Tobacco cultivation also provided the drive for the English colonisation of the Caribbean. From 1624 tobacco plantations were established at St. Kitts, Barbados, Nevis, and Antigua, although, unable to emulate the success of the Chesapeake colonies, these islands would later develop as sugar plantations.[120] In 1620 the puritan colonisation of New England commenced with the establishment of Plymouth colony.[121] In 1630 the Massachusetts Bay Company, under the governorship of John Winthrop, established a colony at Boston, and others soon followed in New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Connecticut.[122] These New England colonies were to develop as 'farming, fishing, and trading communities'.[123]

Throughout the second half of the seventeenth century, and into the early years of the eighteenth century, these Atlantic colonies became increasingly important to English commerce as the demand for tobacco and sugar grew in Europe.[124] Such commodities were no longer deemed a luxury, but rather a necessity, as new habits in consumption dictated consumerism.[125] As demand for these commodities increased, the American colonies were in need of more labour for production. Until the mid-seventeenth century, such labour had been, in the main, provided by indentured servitude; white labourers shipped to the Chesapeake and the Caribbean colonies to work on the plantations. In Virginia's early years these were often the unwanted members of English society who had been forcibly removed from their homeland, such as vagrants and orphans, or

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[118] Taylor, *American Colonies*, p. 137; Coward, *The Stuart Age*, p. 25; Sarson, *British America*, pp. 60, 65.
[119] Ibid. p. 65.
[120] Coward, *The Stuart Age*, p. 25; Andrews, *Trade, plunder and settlement*, pp. 301 – 302; Sarson, *British America*, pp. 93 – 96.
[121] Taylor, *American Colonies*, p. 165.
[122] Richard S. Dunn, 'Experiments holy and unholy, 1630 – 1', in K. R. Andrews et. al. (eds.), *The Westward Enterprise: English activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America 1480 – 1650* (Liverpool, 1978), pp. 271 – 272; Taylor, *American Colonies*, p. 165 – 166.
[123] Coward, *The Stuart Age*, p. 25.
[124] Ibid. p. 478.
[125] Ibid. p. 478.

petty criminals transported as punishment.[126] However, after 1620, indentured servitude was a voluntary life option for many of England's labouring poor; albeit one which was usually dictated by desperation. In order to escape unemployment, poverty and economic hardship, many of the lower classes opted to sign a contract of indentured service which bound them to work in the colonies for four to seven years of their lives.[127] Under the terms of such contracts, a servant would expect to receive basic food, clothing, and shelter, and on completion of a contract, certain 'dues' awarded to them, such as clothes, food, equipment, and even acres of land.[128] To the labouring poor living a meagre existence in England, the chance to own their own land was a major incentive. In reality, however, many never achieved this goal; dying through a combination of disease, overwork in a hot climate, and sometimes brutal punishment from their masters.[129]

By the mid-seventeenth century this source of labour began to dry up, as economic growth in England spurred a rise in real wages, which subsequently improved the lot of the labouring poor.[130] Better circumstances thus lessened the appeal of indentured servitude in the colonies, and an alternative was needed. The burgeoning transatlantic slave trade soon began to provide this alternative, particularly in the Caribbean, with Barbados setting precedence.[131] Enslaved Africans were a much better long-term investment than indentured servants, whose labour was only guaranteed for several years. There was also no 'freedom dues' to be paid, and any child born to a slave automatically became the additional property of the owner.[132] Importation of enslaved Africans therefore increased along with the growing demand for sugar.[133] J. H. Elliott estimates that by '1660 there were as many blacks as whites on the island – perhaps 20,000 of each race – and by the end of the century Barbados,

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[126] Taylor, *American Colonies*, p. 142.
[127] Ibid. p. 142 – 143, 207.
[128] Ibid. p. 142.
[129] Ibid. pp. 143 – 144.
[130] Ibid. pp. 153, 211.
[131] Ibid. p. 212; Coward, *The Stuart Age*, pp. 479 – 480; Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, pp. 103 – 104.
[132] Taylor, *American Colonies*, p. 212.
[133] Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, p. 104.

along with its companion slave societies of Jamaica and the Leewards, had absorbed 250,000 slaves from Africa'.[134] The success and rapid development of the Caribbean sugar trade was thus attributable to the mass importation of black labour.[135] Given this, the transatlantic slave trade was an important component in England's overseas commercial network. Slaves were at first supplied by the Dutch, but the English soon controlled this trade with its colonies.[136]

In 1663, with support from the House of Commons, the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading into Africa was established, and although this company went bankrupt, the Commons nevertheless sponsored the establishment of another.[137] The Royal African Company, founded in 1672, was granted a monopoly on the trade in slaves from Africa to England's American colonies; supplanting its European rivals.[138] Indeed, Nicholas Canny argues that by the close of the seventeenth century, 'English traders represented by the Royal African Company had become the biggest carriers of slaves on the Atlantic'.[139] Furthermore, in 1698 an Act of Parliament terminated the Royal African Company's slave trade monopoly, allowing any English merchant the right to engage in the trade.[140] This subsequently increased both competition, and the numbers of slaves imported into the American colonies.[141] The mainland colonies, which, unlike Barbados, had still relied on white servants to provide their main source of labour, now began to rely on Africans as numbers of indentured servants decreased, and 'slave traders began to visit the Chesapeake in growing numbers, increasing the supply of slaves at stable prices, despite growing demand'.[142] Colonial production was thus dependent on African labour, and the

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[134] Ibid. p. 104.
[135] Coward, *The Stuart Age*, p. 480.
[136] Ibid. pp. 479 – 480; Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, pp. 105 – 106.
[137] Hilary McD. Beckles, 'The 'Hub of Empire': The Caribbean and Britain in the Seventeenth Century', in Nicholas Canny (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume 1: The Origins of Empire* (New York, 1998), pp. 231 – 232.
[138] Ibid. p. 232; Sarson, *British America*, p. 73.
[139] Nicholas Canny, 'The Origins of Empire: An Introduction', in Nicholas Canny (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume 1: The Origins of Empire* (New York, 1998), p. 28.
[140] P. E. H. Hair and Robin Law, 'The English in Western Africa to 1700', in Nicholas Canny (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume 1: The Origins of Empire* (New York, 1998), p. 259.
[141] Ibid. p. 259.
[142] Taylor, *American Colonies*, p. 153.

transatlantic slave trade was of key significance to the commercial success of the colonies, and of the English Empire. Barry Coward explains that by 1714, the slave trade 'had become a major axis of England's new overseas trading pattern. The Atlantic colonies produced sugar and tobacco for import to England and for re-export, and they provided an expanding market for English manufactured goods'.[143]

The increasing demand for colonial commodities, and for the labour to produce these commodities, necessarily resulted in an increase in English merchant shipping. Rediker states that the 'new colonial system, with its captive and quickly growing group of producers and consumers, helped to triple English shipping tonnage in the last half of the seventeenth century'.[144] Such an increase in shipping, carrying in bulk, tobacco and sugar, and other colonial produce such as rice, indigo and molasses, in addition to the transportation of African slaves to the colonies, naturally required an increasing number of sailors to labour aboard these vessels.[145] Masses of ordinary seaman were thus now employed in long distance trade, spending weeks or months on end, confined in crowded forecastles, enduring the rigours of a daily seafaring life fraught with danger and hardship.[146]

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This way of life had significant social and cultural ramifications for the ordinary seaman, and indeed, for the seaman who turned pirate, and thus it is this way of life, and these ramifications, which will now be explored in the following chapter.

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[143] Coward, *The Stuart Age*, p. 480.
[144] Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, p. 20.
[145] Ibid. pp. 19 – 20.
[146] Earle, *Sailors*, pp. 85 – 86.

The Sailor and his Social World

In *The Wooden World Dissected*, which first appeared in 1707, the Tavern-keeper and satirist Edward Ward described the strange, and often violent, behaviour of a sailor when on shore. Ward explained that on land 'he becomes the Primum Mobile of all Hurly-burlies, and the Terror of the Spittlefields Weavers. No Musick-house but has his Presence … he makes a hellish Pother'.[147] This 'hellish pother' would often continue into the night; the sailor 'so often us'd to reeling at Sea, that when he's reeling drunk ashore, he takes it for granted to be a Storm abroad, and falls to throwing every thing out of the Windows, to save the Vessel of a Bawdy-house'.[148] Such a description, in this particular case, may more than likely have been exaggerated, given that Ward was a satirist who was not averse to infusing his work with humorous, and anecdotal wit, which sometimes distorted the truth for the purpose of entertaining the reader.[149] Nevertheless, Ward knew his subject; he observed the mannerisms and behavioural traits of the sailors who frequented his London tavern. He listened to their stories, heard the way they spoke to one another, and observed their dress.[150] Furthermore, Ward himself had spent some time at sea before becoming a Tavern-keeper.[151] As such, his description of the sailor's unusual behaviour, even with its exaggeration, was nevertheless grounded in truth. Indeed, when in seafaring ports such as London, and Bristol, sailors would engage in a bout of riotous behaviour; squandering their wages on drink and whores, and brawling amongst themselves.[152] After long periods at

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[147] Edward Ward, *The Wooden World Dissected* (5th edn., 1751, reprinted London, 1929, with a forward by Geoffrey Callender), p. 98.

[148] Ibid. p. 93.

[149] Geoffrey Callender, 'Forward', in Ward, *Wooden World Dissected*, pp. viii – x; James Sambrook, 'Ward, Edward [Ned] (1667 – 1731)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004 – 2014) http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28682 (accessed 20 June 2014; hereafter cited as Sambrook, 'Ward', *ODNB*.)

[150] Callender, 'Forward', in Ward, *Wooden World Dissected*, p. ix.

[151] Ibid. p. v; Sambrook, 'Ward', *ODNB*.

[152] N. A. M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London, 1988), p. 15; Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700 – 1750* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 146 – 148; N. A. M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649 – 1815* (London, 2006), pp. 61, 214, 400 – 401.

sea, enduring hardship and danger, this time in port was when the sailor could relax, unwind, and release months of pent-up tension.

Such volatile and riotous behaviour, along with other physical and mental characteristics, made the sailor seem culturally alien to his land-based contemporaries. Indeed, when describing London's seafaring districts in the eighteenth century, the magistrate Sir John Fielding commented on the social and cultural differences he observed between land-based society and seafarers. He explained that 'When one goes to Rotherhithe or Wapping, which places (in London) are chiefly inhabited by sailors, but that somewhat of the same language is spoken, a man would be apt to suspect himself in another country. Their manner of living, speaking, acting, dressing and behaving are so peculiar to themselves'.[153] Fielding's description echoed a common contemporary perception. The seafarer, it can be argued, was perceived by his land-based contemporaries as a 'breed apart', culturally and socially different from the rest of English society.[154] Such a perception was, of course, based on observations of the seaman on land, when he was not only out of his natural environment, but also recklessly indulging to release tension. With little knowledge or understanding of the hardship and danger that the seaman had been temporarily released from, they were thus unable to fathom or put into context the peculiarity of his behaviour and appearance, which was so different from their own.[155] This chapter will thus explore this social and cultural difference, and it will also explore the conditions which caused this difference; the social and cultural conditions of maritime labour. In doing so, this chapter will assess how strong this social and cultural difference was for societal division.

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[153] Fielding quoted in Hugh Phillips, *The Thames about 1750* (London, 1951), p. 28, cited in Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, p. 11.
[154] Peter Earle, *Sailors: English Merchant Seamen, 1650 – 1775* (London, 1998), p. 4; Judith Fingard, *Jack in Port: Sailortowns of Eastern Canada* (Toronto, 1982), in Daniel Vickers and Vince Walsh, 'Young Men and the Sea: The Sociology of Seafaring in Eighteenth-Century Salem, Massachusetts', *Social History*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1999), p. 17.
[155] Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 15.

Sailors, as Fielding had observed, were instantly distinguishable from their land-based contemporaries in several ways. Over-exposure to the blistering sun of foreign climes gave them a weather-beaten complexion; their skin heavily tanned, 'not much unlike a Red-Herring'.[156] Time spent in such foreign climates had also exposed them to tropical disease, which had left many with marks upon their skin.[157] Their hands too, were often damaged and scarred; a result of injuries sustained through the handling of heavy cargo, and the maintaining of ships.[158] In contrast to these unwanted markings, the bodies of sailors were often decorated with tattoos.[159] Tattooing took place at sea, not on land, and involved a slow and dangerous process. The skin would be stretched tight, before several needles, bound together and dipped in ink, would be used to puncture a design into the sailor's skin. Chinese or Indian ink was used, but in the absence of this, gunpowder was often used. As a result of the pain and swelling, even the most basic of tattoo designs required several sessions for completion, and so tattooing was usually done throughout long periods at sea. In addition to the pain, this rudimentary process often resulted in infection for the recipient, such as tetanus and gangrene. Thus, due to the slow and painful process, and the risks to health which were involved, tattoos were not usually the mark of the one-time seafarer; they were usually the mark of an experienced sailor, and an indication of a man who had spent a considerable time at sea.[160] However, such markings were not the only aspect of the seaman's physicality which gave away his profession. Long periods at sea affected the way that the sailor walked when he was on land. Too used to life on the waves, the sailor's balance was adapted to the motions of a swaying deck. Ward noted that when sailors walk 'they swing their Corps like a Pendulum, and believe it the most upright steady Motion. They are sure to walk firm, where all other Creatures tumble; and seldom can keep their Legs long, when they get upon Terra firma'.[161] The sailor

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[156] Ward, *Wooden World Dissected*, p. 97; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, p. 12.
[157] Simon P. Newman, 'Reading the Bodies of Early American Seafarers', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 55, No. 1 (1998), pp. 60 – 61.
[158] Ibid. pp. 60 – 61; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, pp. 12, 92 – 93.
[159] Ibid. p. 12; Newman, 'Reading the Bodies of Early American Seafarers', pp. 60 – 61.
[160] Ibid. pp. 61 – 62; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, p. 12.
[161] Ward, *Wooden World Dissected*, p. 14.

therefore walked on land as though he was still aboard a vessel; 'his bowed legs bracing him as if the very Broadway beneath his feet might begin to pitch and roll'.[162]

This combination of unusual gait, and physical markings gave the sailor a distinct presence; a presence which was further accentuated by the sailor's manner of dress. Indeed, the sailor dressed considerably different from the rest of mainland society. His attire was often made from canvas or ticking, and was designed for job specific practicality, rather than for the fashion of the day. The clothes of landsmen; long length coats and waistcoats, along with tight breeches and stockings; would prove a hindrance to the sailor in his line of work. The sailor's jacket was therefore cut short in length, so as to avoid snagging, and ensure ease of movement while scaling the rigging. Tight breeches were shunned in favour of baggy and loose fitting ones, cut short between the ankle and knee. These were often tarred for protection against the wind and the rain, earning him the nickname of 'Jack Tar'. Checked or striped linen shirts were also commonly worn by the sailor, as was a colourful handkerchief or scarf, knotted loosely around his neck, and a fur hat or Monmouth cap worn upon his head for warmth and protection from the elements. Further protection from bad weather at sea was also provided by a short, thick, woollen coat, such as a dreadnought jacket, or a large watch-coat.[163] These clothes; worn for warmth, practicality and safety at sea; were therefore very distinct from those worn by mainland society, and as such, English landsmen viewed them almost as the clothing of a foreign culture. Indeed, Ward likened the sailor's appearance, in his fur hat and thick coat, to that of the Russian Tsar.[164]

It was, however, not just the sailor's behaviour and appearance which made them markedly different from the rest of English society. Fielding had also cited their manner of speaking as another point of differentiation. Indeed, Rediker states that sailors 'had an unmistakable

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[162] Jesse Lemisch, 'Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 25, No. 3 (1968), p. 371.
[163] Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 64; Earle, *Sailors*, pp. 34 – 35; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, pp. 10 – 11.
[164] Ward, *Wooden World Dissected*, p. 92.

way of talking that included technical terms, unusual syntax, distinctive pronunciation, and a generous portion of swearing and cursing'.[165] This was the language of the sea; an occupation specific brand of communication which had developed amongst seafarers. It was thus a language exclusive to the seafarer, and one which was inaccessible and incomprehensible to those who did not live and work within the realms of the maritime world. Nautical terms such as 'topgallant', 'scantling', 'bowsprit', and 'bulkhead', were part of the everyday language of the seafarer, but were puzzling to the landsman. Swearing, cursing and blasphemy were also used in such excess by seafarers that Ward deemed it to be a perfected science amongst them.[166] Indeed, the sailor was 'Bred in "that very shambles of language",[167] making him 'foul-mouthed, his talk alien and suspect'.[168] Sailors cursed and damned one another, and threw insults at each other both seriously, and in jest. They also venomously cursed their enemies, and wished destruction and damnation upon them.[169] Although such coarse and blasphemous language was not exclusive to seafarers alone, it was nevertheless used to such an extent that it became a distinctive verbal trait of the sailor, further enhancing his cultural separation from landsmen. Indeed, Rediker argues that it 'expressed, in a sharp and salty way, his alienation from the polite and religious elements of landed society'.[170] Thus, when the seaman was on land, this distinctly coarse language, infused with its distinct nautical terminology, was yet another element by which the seaman could be distinguished from his land-dwelling counterparts.

The social and cultural contrast between the seaman and the landsman was therefore clearly evident when the sailor was on land, and placed within the context of land-based society. The seaman's unusual characteristics; his riotous behaviour; his curios physicality; his occupation specific dress; his exclusive seafaring language; were all representative of

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[165] Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, p. 11.
[166] Ward, *Wooden World Dissected*, p. 12.
[167] J. R. Hutchinson, *The Press-Gang, Afloat and Ashore* (New York, 1913), p. 29, quoted in Lemisch, 'Jack Tar in the Streets', p. 371.
[168] Lemisch, 'Jack Tar in the Streets', p. 372.
[169] Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, p. 165.
[170] Ibid. p. 167.

his seafaring cultural existence. This was a cultural existence quite different from that of the landsman, and it was one which had developed along with England's colonial expansion, and the growth in its overseas trade. As described in the previous chapter, this growth in trade naturally caused an increase in import and export shipping, which necessarily relied on a mass influx of maritime labour to power the vessels engaged in long distance voyages. This influx was vital, not only for sustaining commercial growth, and generating income for England, but also for generating finances for the Navy, and supplying it with seamen. Indeed, Rodger explains that 'real wealth was generated, … from a maritime system in which overseas trade created the income which paid for the Navy, merchant shipping trained the seamen which manned it, so that the Navy in turn could protect trade and the country'.[171] Vast numbers of sailors were thus spending weeks, and even months at sea in merchant or warships, living an existence which was dictated by their environment, work relations, and the demands of their employment. Living such an existence had social and cultural ramifications for the sailor; ramifications which had been observed by Ward and Fielding. Thus, it can be argued that the seafarer was very much a social and cultural product of his existence. He was a man who had been conditioned by his seafaring employment; an employment which was fraught with hardship, cruelty, and danger. Indeed, such conditions had led the sailor Edward Barlow to express regret over his decision to opt for a life at sea. Writing in his journal in 1681, he conceded that 'it was one of the hardest and dangerousest callings I could have entered upon, wishing many times I had never meddled with it'.[172]

Barlow was well acquainted with the harsh, brutal, and dangerous existence of life in seafaring employment. Born in Prestwich, Lancashire, in 1642, Barlow became a career mariner, having gone to sea as a teenager after securing a place as an apprentice to 'an officer called the Chief

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[171] Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p. 180.
[172] Edward Barlow, *Barlow's journal of his life at sea in king's ships, East and West Indiamen & other merchantmen from 1659 to 1703*, Basil Lubbock (ed.) (2 Vols, London, 1934), Vol. 2, p. 339.

Master's Mate in the third best ship in England, called the Naseby'.[173] Throughout his career he worked aboard both naval and merchant ships, and as such, he knew only too well the dangers of his profession. There was, therefore, no exaggeration when Barlow wrote that a sailor 'many times seeth death approaching on him as though one were going to suffer death for some foul fact committed'.[174] Indeed, sailors were faced with the prospect of injury and death on a daily basis. Maritime labour was physically demanding, and such work was often undertaken in extreme weather conditions; a combination which often resulted in accidents, causing injury and death. The manual labour involved in the frequent handling of heavy cargo, and the repair and maintenance of the ship, would often cause hernias and broken limbs.[175] Seamen given the task of working at great heights, aloft in the tops, also ran the risk of losing their balance, or grip, and falling onto the deck or into the sea. This task was particularly hazardous in the darkness of night or during a storm. Indeed, in his journal, Barlow gives an instance in which he and his fellow mariners were forced, during a storm, to go up into the tops in order to replace sails which had been destroyed by a cross wind.[176] He thus describes hanging 'by our eyelids up in the air, when the ship rolled and tumbled so that we had much ado to hold ourselves fast from falling overboard, above us seeing nothing, and underneath us the raging of the sea, each wave ready to swallow the ship and all up'.[177] Such foul weather could also result in a sailor being washed overboard during rough seas, or accidentally tripping over loose rope, or slipping across deck into the ocean to drown.[178] It could also cause a vessel to be wrecked, either by making it founder in open seas, or by blowing it into rocky coastlines, and causing it to run aground.[179]

It was not only foul weather which caused the destruction of vessels, however. A wooden ship needed to be properly looked after and

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[173] Basil Lubbock, 'Introduction', in Barlow, *Barlow's journal*, Vol. 1, p. 11; Barlow, *Barlow's journal*, Vol. 1, pp. 20, 29.
[174] Ibid. p. 61.
[175] Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, p. 93.
[176] Barlow, *Barlow's journal*, Vol. 1, p. 164.
[177] Ibid. pp. 164 – 165.
[178] Earle, *Sailors*, p. 132.
[179] Ibid. p. 110.

maintained, if it was to survive long voyages at sea. Improper maintenance and neglect by its crew was therefore detrimental to its seaworthiness.[180] Barlow stated that 'many times a ship springeth a leak, so that all the pumps and inventions that they can make cannot keep her free from imminent danger'.[181] Fire was also responsible for the destruction of many ships.[182] Even the smallest rogue flame could be highly dangerous in a vessel made from wood, and carrying flammable materials such as tar, textiles, and alcohol.[183] Carelessness and drunkenness was often the cause; the cook forgetting to put his fire out at night; strong liquor being accidentally set alight; candles not properly snuffed; carelessness when smoking tobacco below deck.[184] Naked flames near gunpowder could also cause a major explosion which no seafarer could hope to escape from.[185]

Another cause of death amongst sailors was disease. This was a particular problem aboard slave ships and East Indiamen; those ships which spent significantly long periods in tropical climates. Sailors on a first time voyage to such climates were more susceptible to contracting tropical diseases, than those who had been 'seasoned' by exposure on previous voyages. Mortality rates were extremely high aboard slave ships which spent time on the West African coast. Malaria and dysentery were the major killers, but other horrific diseases could cause death, or permanent disability, such as river blindness.[186] Furthermore, once a slave ship had left the African coast, the prospect of contracting disease still remained very real. Indeed, those who were lucky enough to avoid disease while collecting their human cargo on the African coast may not be so fortunate while depositing it in the Caribbean colonies. Malaria, hookworm, yellow fever, and yaws were just some of the diseases which could be found in the West Indies.[187]

[180] Ibid. p. 110 – 111.
[181] Barlow, *Barlow's journal*, Vol. 1, p. 61.
[182] Ibid. p. 60.
[183] Ibid. pp. 60 – 61.
[184] Ibid. pp. 60 – 61; Earle, *Sailors*, pp. 110 – 111.
[185] Barlow, *Barlow's journal*, Vol. 1, p. 61.
[186] Earle, *Sailors*, pp. 133 – 137.
[187] Ibid. pp. 135 – 136.

Time spent in Asia could also be just as lethal for sailors. In 1689, John Ovington voyaged from Gravesend to India as chaplain aboard an East India Company ship named the 'Benjamin'. Ovington recorded his experiences of India, which were later published in 1696 as *A Voyage to Suratt in the year 1689*.[188] En route to Surat, the Benjamin called at Bombay, but was forced to stay there longer than anticipated, due to having arrived at the end of May, just before the monsoon season.[189] While harbouring at Bombay for approximately three and a half months, Ovington witnessed the human cost of time spent in such a region.[190] By the time that they were able to leave in September, over twenty of the twenty-four passengers aboard had lost their lives to disease, as had over fifteen of the ship's crew, and if they had stayed 'till the end of the next Month, *October*, the rest would have undergone a very hazardous Fate'.[191] Moving elsewhere in India certainly did not guarantee an escape from disease, however. In Surat, Ovington observed that the 'distemper with which the Europeans are sometimes afflicted, is the Barbeers, or a deprivation of the Use and Activity of their Limbs, whereby they are unable to move either Hand or Foot'.[192] There was also Cholera; referred to by Ovington as 'the Mordechine … another Disease of which some die, which is a violent Vomiting and Looseness'.[193] To such diseases can also be added typhus; a particular problem on crowded Royal Navy Ships; and also scurvy.[194] Scurvy developed as a result of a lack of fresh fruit and vegetables to provide vitamin C; food items which quickly perished on long distance voyages. The longer the voyage, the more chance a sailor had of developing the disease. Indeed, Earle states that it took several weeks at sea, on a poor diet of 'salted and sometimes rotting shipboard rations before scurvy made its appearance, so it was mainly on East Indiamen with

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[188] H. G. Rawlinson, 'Introduction', in J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the year 1689*, H. G. Rawlinson (ed.) (1696, reprinted London, 1929), pp. x, xiv; Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, p. 1.

[189] Rawlinson, 'Introduction', in Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, p. xi; Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, p. 86.

[190] Rawlinson, 'Introduction', in Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, pp. xi – xii; Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, p. 86.

[191] Ibid. p. 86.

[192] Ibid. p. 205.

[193] Ibid. p. 204.

[194] Earle, *Sailors*, p. 135.

their very long passages between ports that the disease had really serious effects'.[195]

Disease, foul weather, and accidents, thus created danger for the sailor, but they were not the only perils of the sea to be feared. Indeed, sailors also faced the likelihood of being attacked by pirates, particularly if they laboured aboard a merchant vessel. The nature of merchant shipping, an industry geared towards gaining maximum profit for as little outlay as possible, ensured its vulnerability to sea predators. To avoid extra expenditure merchant vessels were often lightly armed, and lightly manned.[196] This attention to profit, and its resulting vulnerability, thus provided the perfect opportunity for maritime predation.[197] Ill-equipped to deal with attacks from pirates, many merchant vessels were subsequently taken, and the sailors who worked aboard them often suffered. Indeed, in 1718 a ship named the 'Diamond' was captured off Rum Cay by a sloop named the 'Ranger', commanded by the pirate Charles Vane. In addition to plundering the vessel, Vane and his accomplices set about beating its captain and crew, with one particular sailor; Nathaniel Catling; being hanged from his neck until almost dead, and then slashed with a cutlass across his collar-bone.[198] Catling lived to tell the tale of his ordeal, and while he may not have considered himself fortunate at the time, he can nevertheless be viewed as one of the lucky victims of piracy. Indeed, after taking a Portuguese ship, the pirate Edward Low tortured the captain and 'afterwards murder'd the whole crew being thirty two persons'.[199]

Sailors that did survive such attacks, if they did not choose to join with the pirates voluntarily, were often forced into joining with them, especially if they had much needed skills which would make them an asset aboard a pirate ship, such as those possessed by a surgeon, or a

[195] Ibid. p. 135.
[196] Peter Earle, *The Pirate Wars* (London, 2004), p. 17.
[197] Ibid. p. 17; J. L. Anderson, 'Piracy and World History: An Economic Perspective on Maritime Predation', *Journal of World History*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1995), p. 175.
[198] Depositions of the mariners Samuel Cooper and Nathaniel Catling, from the crew of the 'Diamond', contained within correspondence from Lieutenant Governor Bennett to the Council of Trade and Plantations, May 31, 1718, *CSPC, 1717 – 1718*, pp. 263 – 264.
[199] A relation of Low's barbarity, based on an account given by Nicholas Lewis, Low's former Quarter Master, contained within a letter from Governor Hart to the Council of Trade and Plantations, March 25, 1724, *CSPC, 1724 – 1725*, p. 72.

carpenter.[200] Although such sailors were held against their will, it is nevertheless reasonable to suggest that those who were held captive by a pirate crew of mainly Anglo-American origin would, more than likely, have had a much better experience than those who were held captive by Mediterranean pirates; the most notorious being the Barbary corsairs.[201] Daniel Defoe argued that these predators had done 'enough to *Europe* for so many hundred Years … to deserve to be banish'd from the Sea for ever'.[202] Operating from the coastal regions of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya, thousands of these Muslim sea predators attacked the ships of Christian nations, seizing their cargoes and making slaves of the Christian sailors who were aboard them.[203] In the daytime, these enslaved seamen would be forced to work either as galley slaves or as domestic labourers, before being returned to cramped and squalid slave prisons, known as 'bagnios', where they would spend their nights.[204] Such practices earned the Barbary corsairs a fearsome and notorious reputation amongst seafarers, and although they were at their most powerful during the early seventeenth century, they were still active enough to instil fear into the hearts of eighteenth-century mariners.[205] Indeed, in *A General History of Discoveries and Improvements*, published in four parts between October 1725 and May 1726,[206] Defoe wrote that 'NOT a Sailor goes to Sea in a Merchant Ship, but he feels some secret Tremor, that it may one time or other be his lot to be taken by the *Turks*; it is impossible for a Seaman to sail by the Coast of *Algier*, or *Tunis*, without … a little … fear … it may be his lot to be carry'd in there and sold for a Slave'.[207] Fear of attack was therefore something that the sailor lived with on a daily basis, and it was highly probable that this feeling intensified during periods of war, when the

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[200] William Snelgrave, *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave-Trade* (1734, reprinted London, 1971), p. 279; Letter from General Heywood, Commander in Chief to Jamaica, to the Council of Trade and Plantations, December 3, 1716, *CSPC, 1716 – 1717*, p. 212.
[201] Earle, *Pirate Wars*, p. 39.
[202] Daniel Defoe, *A General History of Discoveries and Improvements* (London, 1725 – 6), in *WTDH*, Vol. 4, p. 120.
[203] Earle, *Pirate Wars*, pp. 39 – 43.
[204] Ibid. p. 42.
[205] Ibid. p. 41.
[206] P. N. Furbank, 'Introduction', in *WTDH*, Vol. 4, p. 5.
[207] Defoe, *Discoveries and Improvements*, in *WTDH*, Vol. 4, p. 121.

chances of being preyed upon increased as a result of the activities of enemy ships and privateering vessels. Furthermore, periods of war made the sailor exposed to another form of predation; that of the Navy.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, sailors, in times of peace, would often move between the maritime trades, depending on the opportunity and wages offered. To the sailor, the naval vessel was viewed as just another source of maritime employment.[208] However, this attitude changed significantly with the outbreak of war, as conflict made the Navy a much less attractive option. Indeed, with the large scale mobilisation of fighting fleets, the skilled sailor became an asset to be competed over amongst the maritime trades. Merchant vessels offered seamen a significant increase in wages, both as a way of securing their services, and to compensate for the possibility of being attacked. Navy wages, however, did not increase during wartime. Furthermore, wages paid were often in arrears of around six months or more; the Navy often purposely withholding it as insurance to combat desertion.[209] Shore leave for Navy seamen was also subject to restrictions for the same reason. The sailors who were granted leave were often those that were owed large amounts in wages, and, if they were given some of what they were owed before going ashore, it was usually nowhere near the full amount, thus maintaining the Navy's financial hold. It could therefore be some time until a seaman had accrued enough finances to act as security for him to be able to set foot on land.[210] This time away from land could be further increased if the seaman was unfortunate enough to be amongst a crew 'turned over' to another vessel. This was a process by which the crew of a naval vessel which was coming in for maintenance would be 'turned over' to an outgoing vessel.[211] Earle notes that those sailors who were subjected to this process 'might spend years without setting foot in England'.[212] Such limitations on personal

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[208] Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, pp. 116 – 117; Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 113.
[209] Earle, *Sailors*, p. 188; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, pp. 32 – 33; Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 133.
[210] Earle, *Sailors*, p. 189; Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 133.
[211] Earle, *Sailors*, p. 189.
[212] Ibid. p. 189.

freedom contrasted greatly with the long periods that merchant sailors could often spend ashore while waiting for another voyage.[213]

Given the low wages on offer, the restrictions on shore leave, the ritual of the 'turnover', and the obvious danger that came with manning a naval ship in wartime, the Navy, not surprisingly, found it difficult to attract volunteers. Thus during the early stages of conflict the number of volunteers swiftly diminished, and the navy was forced to accumulate mariners by other means. First, the Navy offered a bounty, usually of one or two guineas, to seamen who volunteered, but then when this could not produce volunteers quick enough, an embargo would often be placed on outgoing merchant vessels. Such embargoes could often last for several weeks, with sailors sometimes being forced from their crews, and into the Navy.[214] Indeed, Barlow described such an instance in 1696, when news of an intended French invasion had resulted in men-of-war resorting to this tactic at Spithead. Barlow wrote that the men-of-war 'had orders to take all merchant ship men, so they took men out of all our East India ships … And an embargo being laid upon all ships, we were forced to go into Portsmouth Harbour to get men again when we could, no ship then being suffered to go out of the land'.[215] However, while merchant seamen were sometimes forced, Earle states that the Navy would usually make an agreement with 'merchants and shipowners to give up some of their crews as a condition of having their ships released and the rest of their men protected'.[216] This notwithstanding, embargoes often resulted in limited success as, upon their imposition, sailors would often run ashore into the seafaring districts to hide.[217] With these avenues exhausted, and seamen still needed, the Navy, then, would often resort to the press; capturing men both on land and at sea.

On land, the press gangs, which contained a mixture of naval sailors and local muscle, would search the haunts of sailors; the brothels, taverns and gin shops of the seafaring districts; looking to ensnare mariners into

[213] Ibid. p. 189.
[214] Ibid. p. 189.
[215] Barlow, *Barlow's journal*, Vol. 2, p. 458.
[216] Earle, *Sailors*, p. 189.
[217] Ibid. p. 189.

naval service. These gangs, not surprisingly, often met with resistance, from not only the sailors they found, but also from landsmen sympathetic to the sailor's plight. Clashes between the two sides were often violent, and as a result the gangs did not usually capture vast amounts of men, and many of those who were captured were often not fit for the Navy's purpose.[218] More successful, however, was the press which operated at sea. Press vessels manned with around forty naval seamen would wait patiently for an incoming merchant vessel to board and make its crew captive. As such, a merchant sailor making his way home to expectant loved ones, may not even get the chance to set foot on land before being pressed.[219] Such a harsh experience befell Barlow in 1668, when he was pressed into one of the King's vessels, a frigate called the 'Yarmouth'. Barlow stated that he 'was not suffered to go ashore in any place in half a year afterward'.[220] Thus, while the press at sea was more successful, as it captured a higher quantity of able and seasoned seamen, it was nevertheless much crueller than the press on land.[221] Indeed, Barlow explained that 'It is a very bad thing for a poor seaman when he is pressed in this manner, for if he have wife and children he is not suffered to go to see them'.[222] Faced with this possibility, sailors often resisted the press at sea as they did on land; with brutal violence. Rediker explains that sailors used 'swords, blunderbusses, pistols, and twelve-, six-, and half-pound cannon. Fingers were lopped off, skulls fractured, and bodies pierced with bullets as press gangs in search of labour tried to board merchant vessels'.[223]

Aside from the violence, however, there were other ways in which sailors sought to avoid the press. The sailor and poet, John Baltharpe, wrote of such methods in *The Straights Voyage, or, St. Davids Poem*, published in 1671. While pressing seaman for the 'St. David', Baltharpe,

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[218] Ibid. p. 191.
[219] Ibid. pp. 191 – 192.
[220] Barlow, *Barlow's journal*, Vol. 1, p. 146.
[221] Earle, *Sailors*, pp. 191 – 192.
[222] Barlow, *Barlow's journal*, Vol. 1, p. 146.
[223] Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, p. 238.

who may possibly have been a petty officer,[224] had to go down into a ship's hold to capture some hidden sailors 'For down i'th Coals they deep were buried'.[225] Others tried to use deception to fool Baltharpe and the rest of the press, by growing their beards long and pretending to be old and feeble. Initially the trick worked, but the press soon realised that they had been duped, and subsequently pressed these 'old' men. The sailors tried in vain to convince Barltharpe and the press that they really were old, however, their protestations were ignored, as the St. David had aboard a 'Barber-Surgeon, which could Cure, Three such Old-men, in half an Houre'.[226] Once shaved, these pretend old salts were revealed to be 'men of Thirty years of Age'.[227]

Seafaring employment was thus a dangerous business to be in, and for those who were engaged in such an occupation, the perils of the sea meant that any day could potentially be their last. Sailors were thus brave fellows, who looked death in the eye on a daily basis. Indeed, Ward wrote that 'No Man can have a greater Contempt for Death, for every Day he constantly shits upon his own Grave, and dreads a Storm no more, than he does a broken Head, when drunk'.[228] Such bravery was therefore a much needed characteristic which enabled the sailor to function effectively in an environment tainted with such uncertainty over the future. This uncertainty also resulted in the development of the sailor's 'live for the moment' seafaring attitude and mindset.[229] Sailors were 'concerned only for the present...incapable of thinking of, or inattentive to, future welfare'.[230] It was this mentality which was responsible for the sailor's riotous behaviour when on land. After living and working within an environment where the threat of death was ever-present, the sailor on leave would recklessly drink, whore, and spend his pay, as if it was his last day on earth, which indeed, it may

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[224] J.S. Bromley, 'Introduction', in John Baltharpe, *The Straights Voyage, or, St. Davids Poem*, J. S. Bromley (ed.) (1671, reprinted Oxford, 1959), pp. xliv – xlvii; Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p. 91.
[225] Baltharpe, *The Straights Voyage*, p. 12.
[226] Ibid. p. 12.
[227] Ibid. p. 13.
[228] Ward, *Wooden World Dissected*, p. 91.
[229] Lemisch, 'Jack Tar in the Streets', p. 372.
[230] Congressman Edward Livingstone, Apr. 10, 1798, United States, Congress, *Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States* … (Washington, D. C., 1834 – 1856), 5th Cong., 2d sess., 1388, quoted in Lemisch, 'Jack Tar in the Streets', p. 372.

well be.[231] However, the omnipresence of danger was not the only hardship a seaman had to contend with at sea.

Sailors, Earle argues, were in the main a 'rough lot given to arguing and fighting and contemptuous of those weaker or less skilled than themselves'.[232] Brawling was common amongst them, and they would also box one another for recreation.[233] Indeed, noting the sailor's propensity for violence, Ward explained that 'It is hard to say which he can box best, his Brother Tar, or his Compass … But tho' he handles his Hands the best of any Man, he trusts most to his Head … and does manage it with as much Skill and Force, as any Bull or Ram'.[234] Bullying was also common within the all-male environment of the ship. Old sailors were insulted by 'being always called "old dog", and "old rogue", and "son of a whore", and such like terms'.[235] The young were picked on and the incompetent ridiculed.[236] Cruel forms of entertainment were also common aboard ship, such as the 'ducking' of sailors when 'crossing the line'. Those sailors who had not previously been on a voyage which crossed the Tropic of Cancer or the Equator, or had never before entered the Strait of Gibraltar, would have to pay a fine, such as a bottle of brandy and some sugar, or face being 'ducked' from the yardarm. Such cruel entertainment provided the more experienced sailors with both drink and enjoyment at the expense of the inexperienced, while at the same time it served to increase the captain's profits through the extra sale of drink to his crew.[237] This cruel form of entertainment was not, however, the only way in which a captain could make a profit from his crew.

As sailors did not usually receive the full amount of pay which was owed them until returning from a completed voyage, goods such as alcohol, clothing and any other necessaries could be purchased from the captain on credit, albeit at a greater cost than on land.[238] Sailors labouring aboard

[231] Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, pp. 61, 400, 214.
[232] Earle, *Sailors*, p. 97.
[233] Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, pp. 250 – 251.
[234] Ward, *Wooden World Dissected*, pp. 96 – 97.
[235] Barlow, *Barlow's journal*, Vol. 1, p. 162.
[236] Earle, *Sailors*, p. 97.
[237] Ibid. p. 96 – 97.
[238] Ibid. p. 33.

merchant vessels were also held accountable for any losses or damage caused to cargo or equipment, and as such, they could not be 'sure of what they work for before they have it in their pockets, for when they come home, if there be any damage then in the goods, though against all reason, their wages must pay for it'.[239] This became a particular grievance for seamen who were forced to pay for 'damnified merchants' goods, they being in no fault of it, and against all reason if things were rightly considered'.[240] In addition to such deductions, a sailor was at risk of losing his wages entirely in the event of shipwreck or capture, and it was also not uncommon for ship captains and owners to refuse to pay sailors outright, although this was often rectified, as many sailors successfully sued for the wages they were owed through the High Court of Admiralty.[241] Notwithstanding this success, however, simmering grievances over wages, combined with the atmosphere created by bullying, made for a tense and hostile environment. This atmosphere was further intensified by the use of disciplinary violence which characterised life aboard ship and played a significant role in heightening tension and resentment between crew and captain.

Indeed, in addition to the violence from outside the ship; attacks from pirates, privateers, enemy vessels, and the press; and the violence from fellow mariners within the ship, the seaman also had to contend with violence in the form of punishment doled out by disciplinarian captains and masters. Punishment was usually the most severe aboard naval vessels, although aboard merchantmen and even aboard the more relaxed privateers, a sailor could expect to be flogged or placed in irons for crimes such as desertion, mutiny and theft.[242] Such punishment could be used as a necessity, and a master of a vessel 'may, with the Advice of the Mate and Pilot, cause to be duck'd, or put in the Hole, and inflict such sort of Punishments upon drunken and disobedient Seamen, or upon such as

[239] Barlow, *Barlow's journal*, Vol. 1, p. 165.
[240] Ibid. p. 166; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, p. 144 – 145; Earle, *Sailors*, p. 36.
[241] Ibid. pp. 36 – 38; George F. Steckley, 'Litigious Mariners: Wage Cases in the Seventeenth-Century Admiralty Court', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (1999), pp. 315 – 345.
[242] Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, pp. 214 – 215; Earle, *Sailors*, pp. 154 – 156.

abuse their Comrades'.[243] Moreover, punishment and moderate correction, when needed, and when executed with fairness, was an accepted part of the seafaring world.[244] Rodger notes that sailor's had no complaint when a 'captain had dirty, lazy or thieving men flogged, for they disrupted the crowded world of the ship's company, and threw extra work on their shipmates'.[245] However, the ambiguity surrounding what constituted as fair and moderate punishment was where the captain's acceptable rights of chastisement could often turn into an abuse of power.[246] Indeed, many sailors often suffered at the hands of brutal captains whose brand of discipline was tantamount to cruelty and torture.[247] Trivial and minor offences, such as the forgetting of a chore or using the wrong material to make a sail, would give these violent captains cause to severely beat, cut, and whip members of their crew, using anything to hand such as cutlasses, broomsticks, canes, tar brushes, and even an 'Elephant's dry'd Pizle'.[248]

Allegations which were brought to the High Court of Admiralty show that such beatings could result in horrific injuries for the sailor, such as in the case of James Conroy who claimed that he had his eye gouged out by his captain, or in the case of John Phillips who claimed that he was left permanently disabled from being attacked with a marlin-spike while he slept.[249] Some sailors were even murdered at the hands of brutal masters, such as Valentine Arrisson who died of cutlass wounds inflicted by Captain Robert Ranson.[250] Such incidents were the extreme cases, however, and Rediker notes that they were 'in fact...preserved among admiralty records

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[243] Alexander Justice, *A general treatise of the dominion and laws of the sea, containing, what is most valuable on that subject, in ancient and modern authors* (London, 1705), p. 330.
[244] Earle, *Sailors*, pp. 147 – 148.
[245] Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p. 321.
[246] Earle, *Sailors*, p. 148.
[247] Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, p. 218.
[248] Ibid. pp. 212 – 222; Andrew Andrewson, Arnold v. Ranson, HCA 24/129 (1706), quoted in Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, p. 217.
[249] Deposition of James Conroy, HCA 1/16 (1707), f. 133, in Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, p. 216; Phillips v. Haskins, HCA 24/133 (1722), in Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, pp. 216 – 217.
[250] Depositions of the Seamen (Jonathan Yates, Joseph Bottick, William Hurnard, Samuel Miller, Henry King) of the Ship *Thomas and John* relating to the Murder of Valentine Arrisson by the Master of the said Ship, CO 5/1315 (1706), in Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, pp. 220 – 221.

because they represented transgressions of both custom and law'.[251] Furthermore, such incidents may also have been exaggerated by the sailor in order to portray the captain in the worse possible light.[252] Nevertheless, Earle argues that sailors were 'unlikely to exaggerate so much as to make their claims ridiculous. They hoped to be believed and sometimes were, a fact which makes it probable that there were indeed such monstrous officers at sea'.[253]

The life of the eighteenth-century sailor was thus fraught with hardship, danger, cruelty, and violence, and this had significant social and cultural ramifications; ramifications which, as aforementioned, were clearly noticeable when the sailor was on land, and thus out of his natural environment. Jack Tar's unusual gait, curious physical markings, and strange attire, gave him a distinct presence; a distinct presence which was further emphasised by his language, and his wild, and often violent behaviour. Such behaviour ensured that he made a 'hellish Pother'[254] wherever he went, being 'always the first to *turn out* … whether to fight, to drink … or to *kick up a row*'.[255] Indeed, Defoe observed that sailors 'swear violently, whore violently, drink punch violently, spend their money when they have it violently'.[256] Such dangerous and violent behaviour was therefore a release of tension by a man who had been conditioned by a dangerous and violent existence. Indeed, Lemisch concurs that 'Jack *was* violent; the conditions of his existence were violent'.[257] Jack was, then, a personification of the dangerous and violent maritime world in which he came from; a world which was socially and culturally alien to his land-based contemporaries. Given this, it is little wonder that the sailor was seen as a 'breed apart' by land-based society.

However, while the sailor was viewed as different, he was still, nevertheless, accepted by land-based society on account of his skills.

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[251] Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep*, p. 221.
[252] Earle, *Sailors*, p. 147.
[253] Ibid. p. 147.
[254] Ward, *Wooden World Dissected*, p. 98.
[255] Quote from an unknown source, cited in E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1991), p. 663.
[256] Daniel Defoe, *Review* ii, 47, cited in Earle, *Sailors*, p. 13.
[257] Lemisch, 'Jack Tar in the Streets', p. 406.

Indeed, as the maritime worker supplied the labour which powered overseas colonial trade, he was therefore a valuable asset which was needed for commercial growth. Thus while the sailor's drunken, violent, and wild behaviour was often frowned upon by the landsman, his valued skillset helped to reconcile differences between the two. Indeed, after initially shunning seafarers, New England's seventeenth-century Puritan colonists soon began to associate with them when in need of their skills. John William McElroy explains that as the Puritan colonists were 'yeomen, middle-class tradesmen, and lesser gentry',[258] they were therefore unfamiliar with seafaring life. For many of them, their first experience of seafaring, and of sailors, would more than likely have been aboard the vessels which transported them from England.[259] 'On landing … most of them would probably have agreed that seafarers, generally, were rude fellows – blasphemous and unfit to associate with "God's people".[260] This opinion was not surprising, as sailors frequently mocked and reviled the Puritans for their religious ways.[261] However, as colonial trade grew in the 1640's, and more vessels were built to carry this trade, the skills of the seafarer became much in demand throughout the ports of New England. In exchange for his services, the seaman was thus offered a monthly wage of up to forty-five shillings, and a space aboard the vessel, where he could keep his own goods for private trade.[262] McElroy argues that it was the offer of 'this "portlidge privilege," more than the high wages, that broke down the puritanical and landlubberly prejudices of the colonists against association with the seafaring tribe, for no sooner had the mariner's calling been sanctified by closer relationship with trade, than it began to lose its earlier unsavoury reputation'.[263]

Given this, it could be argued that the seafarer only found acceptance from the Puritan colonists once his skills became more closely identified with, and adapted for, commercial growth. Such an argument

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[258] John William McElroy, 'Seafaring in Seventeenth-Century New England', *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (1935), p. 331.
[259] Ibid. p. 331.
[260] Ibid. p. 331.
[261] Ibid. pp. 332, 346.
[262] Ibid. p. 333.
[263] Ibid. p. 333.

could certainly find corroboration in the social-change theories of the historian Samuel Rawson Gardiner, and the German sociologist Max Weber. Indeed, in his *History of the Great Civil War, 1642 – 9*; a narrative history of the English Civil War, produced between 1886 and 1891; Gardiner put forward a social change theory which centred on a belief in the 'progressive' power of Protestantism as a force for reformist change. According to this theory, the radical element of Protestantism, the Puritan gentry, could be identified as the ascending force of social change, contrasting with the declining element of the old feudal order of the nobility and monarchy. The Civil War was thus a conflict between a progressive force on the ascent, and a regressive force on the decline.[264] This belief in the progressive power of Protestantism was further emphasised in Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, published in 1904, in which Weber, as John Adamson notes, 'famously postulated a linkage between the middle classes' obvious commercial and political success, on the one hand, and the spirit of enterprise and achievement engendered by Protestantism, on the other'.[265] Thus, according to this school of thought, the middle-class Puritans were the force for change, creating a capitalist system based on maritime mercantilism. If such theories are to be accepted then, and the ascendancy of capitalism can be identified with the ascendant forces of progressive Protestantism, it can therefore be argued that when the sailor began to adapt his skills for mercantilism, the nature of his work thus adhered to middle-class Puritan ideals of capitalist growth, and as such he now became acceptable to the Puritan merchants of New England.

Notwithstanding this, it could also be argued that the Puritan middle-class merchants of New England began to accept the sailor through necessity, rather than through any religious ideal. The shunning of the seafarer meant that that the colonists did not have any properly skilled mariners, and as such, when colonial trade grew and shipping increased, they had little choice but to turn to the skilled sailor. A growing sea-trade

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[264] John Adamson, 'Introduction: High Roads and Blind Alleys – The English Civil War and its Historiography', in John Adamson (ed.), *The English Civil War, Conflict and Contexts, 1640 – 49* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 5 – 9.
[265] Ibid. p. 7.

thus ensured that whether they liked it or not, the Puritan colonists became dependant on the experienced seaman, and therefore accepted him. Furthermore, the experienced seaman was needed to teach the next generation of colonial-born seafarers. Indeed, the colonists needed to put their sons to sea, and to learn the trade from experienced seafarers in order to ensure the growth and survival of New England's maritime mercantilism. The Puritan colonists therefore had to embrace seafaring culture, or at least elements of it, while still remaining staunch in their religious conviction.[266] Seafaring culture thus became fused with Puritanism, and McElroy explains that, by the middle of the seventeenth century, the New England sailor had evolved into 'a queer hybrid of Bible-quoting Yankee skipper, "trying all ports" for a lawful trade but meanwhile keeping his weather eye cocked for a chance to … slip a couple of stolen nags in with his cargo of horses for Jamaica or Barbadoes, or toss a dipsy lead wrapped in dried codfish into the scales when he was weighing out his cargo at "Bilboa".[267]

This chapter has thus shown that seafarers, while viewed as somewhat of a 'breed apart' by their land-based contemporaries were nevertheless accepted by them. Indeed, while the labouring-class sailor's seafaring employment had made him socially and culturally different from the landsman, his life was nevertheless still governed by the same hierarchical structure at sea, as those who lived on land. This was a system whereby a minority governed and dictated the existence of the majority; the elite upper class, and the rising middle classes, governing and dictating the existence of the masses of the poor and labouring classes. This hierarchical system was represented and enforced at sea by the merchant captain and the naval officer; a minority whose authority governed the masses of the lower-class maritime labourers.[268] Thus, although the sailor may have spent much of his life at sea, and therefore geographically outside of England, he did not, however, live his life outside of the confines of English society. Indeed, he was a subject of England, governed by its

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[266] McElroy, 'Seafaring in Seventeenth-Century New England', pp. 333 – 335.
[267] Ibid. p. 335.
[268] Marcus Rediker, "Under the Banner of King Death": The Social World of Anglo-American Pirates, 1716 to 1726', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 38, No. 2 (1981), p. 214.

laws and its hierarchical system, and although he may have looked, spoke, and behaved differently, he was, nevertheless, just as much a part of English society as the landsman. It could be argued, then, that the sailor was not so much a 'breed apart', but more of a sub-culture within; a sub-culture fashioned by its collective experience of hardship, danger, cruelty and violence. Such an experience not only had social and cultural ramifications for the sailor, however; it also had social and cultural ramifications for the nature of piracy. Indeed, this experience was the impetus which spurred the seafarer to make the transition from maritime labourer to maritime outlaw, and to create for himself an alternative society altogether.

Entr'acte: The Transition from Seaman to Pirate

In 1701, the London printer and publisher John Nutt began printing and selling a pamphlet titled *Piracy Destroy'd: Or, A short Discourse Shewing The Rise, Growth and Causes of Piracy of late; with a sure Method how to put a speedy stop to that growing Evil*.[269] The author, while not giving an actual name, claimed to be 'an Officer of an *East-India* Ship Lately arriv'd in the River'.[270] He argued that the causes of piracy could be placed into two classes; '*Real*, and *pretended*'.[271] Of the first, he claimed that the 'real' cause of piracy was 'undoubtedly, the general depravation of Seamens manners, and their little or no sense of Religion'.[272] As explained in the previous chapter, however, the seaman's life was not entirely devoid of religion. Although seafarers had mocked New England's Puritan colonists for their piousness, by the middle of the seventeenth century, seafaring culture had become entwined with Protestantism in New England.[273] Furthermore, John Ovington's religious presence aboard the 'Benjamin' in 1689 was nothing unusual, and H. G. Rawlinson has stated that it 'was customary for almost every vessel, mercantile or naval, to carry a chaplain in those days'.[274] Nevertheless, the author of *Piracy Destroy'd* explained that not all ships engaged in this customary practice; describing the 'aversion many Commanders have to the carrying of a Minister to Sea with them, and some that do will scarce permit them to do the Duty of their Office once a Week'.[275] The status of the Sabbath as a holy day, he explained, was also frequently undermined, as sailors were often made to

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[269] Margaret R. Hunt, 'Nutt [*formerly* Carr], Elizabeth (*b.* in or before 1666, *d.* 1746)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004 – 2014) http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/66882 (accessed 22 May 2014); Michael Harris, 'Nutt, Richard (1693/4? – 1780)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004 – 2014) http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/73737 (accessed 22 May 2014); Unknown author, *Piracy Destroy'd: Or, A short Discourse Shewing The Rise, Growth and Causes of Piracy of late; with a sure Method how to put a speedy stop to that growing Evil* (London, 1701), in *BPGA*, Vol. 3, p. 383.
[270] Ibid. p. 383.
[271] Ibid. p. 387.
[272] Ibid. p. 387.
[273] John William McElroy, 'Seafaring in Seventeenth-Century New England', *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (1935), pp. 332, 335, 346.
[274] H. G. Rawlinson, 'Introduction', in J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the year 1689*, H. G. Rawlinson (ed.) (1696, reprinted London, 1929), p. x.
[275] Unknown author, *Piracy Destroy'd*, in *BPGA*, Vol. 3, p. 390.

work on a Sunday, thus depriving them of an opportunity to worship God.[276] According to the author, one particular commander, who had previously been engaged in long distance shipping, was even 'bound under an Obligation by his Employers not to carry a Minister with him to Sea'.[277]

Such an absence of religious presence and practice aboard a ship was, the author argued, 'one ready way to unchristian People in those long Voyages for several Years together'.[278] Thus, he believed that this lack of religion led to the moral corruption of the sailor, which manifested itself in vice; drunkenness, swearing, whoring, violence, and gambling;[279] moral debasement which he identified as the 'real' cause of piracy. As such, the author believed that if this lack of religion was amended, by ensuring that each ship carried a religious figure who would conduct regular services, then 'it would create in … Seamen such a Veneration for Religion and the Author of it, that they would grow more and more in love with the practice of it, and be so much reform'd, that they would abhor the very thoughts of the commission of any such detestible Crime as Pyracy'.[280]

The second class of causes which the author identified, were ones that 'the Pryats usually alledge themselves'.[281] The causes of piracy, then, according to the pirates themselves, were rooted in the harsh and cruel treatment that they experienced during their time as maritime labourers; the cruelty of impressment and the 'turnover'; the unwarranted and barbaric beatings from captains; the experience of being cheated out of fresh victuals and pay.[282] According to the author, however, such causes were '*pretended*',[283] and not deemed to be 'real'. They were 'pretences commonly given by Pyrates, in order to excuse their horrid Trade of Pyracy'.[284] However, while on the surface the author may have seemed to dismiss such claims as mere excuses rather than actual valid causes, he nevertheless advocated means of redress with regard to them. Indeed, with

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[276] Ibid. p. 390.
[277] Ibid. p. 390.
[278] Ibid. p. 390.
[279] Ibid. pp. 390, 410.
[280] Ibid. p. 391.
[281] Ibid. p. 387.
[282] Ibid. pp. 387 – 389, 393 – 397.
[283] Ibid. p. 387.
[284] Ibid. pp. 393 – 394.

regard to seamen being cheated out of adequate victuals, 'either through the Purser's carelessness, or coveteousness',[285] the author called for 'a strict order to Commanders to see justice done in this matter'.[286] The cheating of seamen out of their pay, along with the process of the 'turnover', was an 'Evil … so visible',[287] that he hoped it would be 'redress'd for the future'.[288] In order to correct the brutal and unwarranted punishments meted out aboard merchant ships, the author advocated that 'Commanders ought to use their Men like fellow Christians, and not to suffer their tempers to grow moross and harsh in the Execution of their commands'.[289] Such calls for redress suggest that although the author may not have deemed the harsh and cruel treatment of seamen as a 'real' or major cause of piracy, he nevertheless recognised that such treatment was, no doubt, a contributory factor. Indeed, he acknowledged that 'If Seamens complaints of Diet and otherwise were, at the end of the Voyage heard and satisfaction given, it would prevent the desperate courses they take for the future'.[290]

With such an acknowledgment, it does, therefore, seem strange that the author did not class the treatment of sailors as a 'real' cause of piracy. However, that being said, if the author really was an 'Officer of an *East-India Ship*',[291] his reluctance to class such treatment as a 'real' cause of piracy, may have been an exercise in diplomacy. The author clearly considered the treatment of sailors as a significant causal factor for piracy; enough to devote several pages of his pamphlet to the redress of such treatment. However, if the author was to class such treatment as a 'real' cause, then he would be placing a considerable part of the blame for piracy on the captains, and officers, of merchant and naval vessels; a group of which he is part of; and on the system which they enforce, and of which he also enforces. Furthermore, he would also be seen to have been in agreement with the pirates, thus aligning himself with those who commit such a

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[285] Ibid. p. 395.
[286] Ibid. p. 395.
[287] Ibid. p. 396.
[288] Ibid. p. 396.
[289] Ibid. p. 396.
[290] Ibid. p. 397.
[291] Ibid. p. 383.

'detestible Crime'.[292] Given this, it can be argued that the author had to exercise considerable tact when writing his pamphlet. Indeed, by not classing the treatment of sailors as a 'real' cause of piracy, and yet still acknowledge its contribution, the author was able to address this treatment, and advocate for its redress, while under a veneer of dismissiveness which protected himself from the possibility of alienation from his fellow officers. Thus, the causes that the pirates 'alledge themselves'[293] became '*pretended*'.[294]

In reality, however, such causes were far from pretend; indeed, they were very real. On May 27th, 1726, a boatswain named William Fly had orchestrated a mutiny aboard a Bristol snow called the 'Elizabeth', which was sailing from Jamaica to Guinea. The captain, John Green, was disturbed from his sleep and dragged out on to the deck, and, after having his hand chopped off, was thrown overboard along with the first mate, Thomas Jenkins. The mutineers then turned pirate, and set about plundering vessels along the north Atlantic coast, before being overpowered by some of their captives and taken into Boston to face trial; a trial in which Fly was subsequently sentenced to death. Before his execution in Boston, on July 12th, 1726, however, Fly stood defiantly on the scaffold, and addressed the throng of spectators which had gathered to see him hang.[295] Rather than repent for his sins, he instead chose to issue a warning, advising 'the Masters of Vessels to carry it well to their Men, lest they should be put upon doing as he had done'.[296] Fly's last words were thus a threatening instruction to ship captains everywhere, urging them to treat their crews with fairness and kindness, or face the consequences of mutiny and piracy. Fly's piracy was thus caused by the harsh treatment he had suffered. Furthermore, he felt that his piratical ways were justified as a result of it. Indeed, when urged by the Boston minister Cotton Mather to

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[292] Ibid. p. 391.
[293] Ibid. p. 387.
[294] Ibid. p. 387.
[295] Daniel E. Williams, 'Puritans and Pirates: A Confrontation between Cotton Mather and William Fly in 1726', *Early American Literature*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (1987), pp. 238 – 239; Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations* (London, 2004), pp. 1 – 4.
[296] Cotton Mather, *The Vial poured out upon the Sea* (Boston, 1726), p. 48, quoted in Williams, 'Puritans and Pirates', p. 245.

confess and admit guilt for his 'Cruel and Bloody *Murders*',[297] prior to his execution, Fly angrily exclaimed, *' – I shan't own myself Guilty of any Murder. – Our Captain and his Mate used us Barbarously. We poor Men can't have Justice done us. There is nothing said to our Commanders, let them ever so much abuse us, and use us like Dogs. But the poor Sailors – '*.[298]

Although a degree of caution needs to be exercised when generalising about the pirates of this era, it can nevertheless be argued that William Fly was typical of the pirates who were active during the final phase of piracy's golden age. Indeed, Fly was a man of low-class origin who had claimed that, prior to turning pirate, he had suffered abuse and cruel treatment while employed as a maritime labourer.[299] As already explained in the previous chapters, this was a seafaring origin that was shared by the vast majority of pirates. The growth of English overseas commercial activity had necessitated a mass influx of labour to ensure its continuation, and this resulted in a mass injection of the working classes into maritime employment, thus creating a seafaring proletariat. This seafaring proletariat, powering England's commercial development and growth, were forced to adapt to the conditions of a new working environment; spatial confinement, and adherence to routine, and shift pattern; and also to a new set of working relationships, both with fellow labourers, and with the authority figures who supervised their labour.[300] The development of this new working environment fundamentally changed the nature of seafaring life, and Rediker has argued that the conditions of this environment were a forerunner to conditions which would later be seen during the Industrial Revolution. He argued that the seaman's experience of confinement, regulated routine, and work relations, foreshadowed that of the worker in the factory system.[301] Furthermore, he has argued that the often brutal

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[297] Mather, *The Vial poured out*, p. 21, quoted in Williams, 'Puritans and Pirates', p. 243.
[298] Mather, *The Vial poured out*, p. 21, quoted in Williams, 'Puritans and Pirates', p. 243.
[299] Daniel Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, Manuel Schonhorn (ed.) (Vol. 1, 4th edn., 1726, Vol. 2, 1728, combined and reprinted New York, 1999), p. 606; Rediker, *Villains*, p. 2.
[300] Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700 – 1750* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 206.
[301] Ibid. p. 206.

punishment that was meted out by merchant captains was a form of capitalist discipline, which needs to be seen within the context of a 'relationship between the seaman who provided labor power and the captain who directed that labor power within a productive, profit-orientated enterprise'.[302] Earle, however, argues against this, and instead, likens the often cruel and violent conduct of these captains to 'that of bullying gangster chiefs rather than capitalists imposing a protofactory discipline'.[303] However, whether a protofactory discipline, or a form of work-place bullying, this violence was a product of the new working environment which had been created by England's commercial development; an environment which had dramatic social and cultural ramifications for the nature of piracy. Indeed, because this commercial development had created a mass seafaring proletariat, and also created a new and hostile working environment which subsequently caused many of this proletariat, like William Fly, to turn pirate, this development was therefore responsible for a significant change in the social make-up of pirate crews. Thus, pirates of the latter phase of the golden age 'almost without exception came from the lowest social classes'.[304]

This collective, social experience, made the pirates of this era radically different from any which had come before. Indeed, it became a unifying bond between them, and it also laid the foundations for the creation of an alternative society amongst them; a criminal society, with its own social order and culture. This piratical society differed from the conventions of English society in several ways. As this society was predominantly composed of lower-class people, it was, by composition, a society of social equals. This greatly differed from the hierarchical social order of England; a social order with an elite upper class, a rising middle-class gentry, and the lower social classes, which contained varying degrees of poverty. Furthermore, the pirates actively sought to preserve this social equality, and did so through the social organisation of the pirate ship. This alternative social order was also complemented by an alternative cultural identity. As

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[302] Ibid. p. 212.
[303] Peter Earle, *Sailors: English Merchant Seamen, 1650 – 1775* (London, 1998), p. 147.
[304] Rediker, *Villains*, p. 50.

with almost any society, this piratical society could be somewhat identified by its own particular cultural traits. Violence was key to the pirate's own sense of cultural identity, and through this violence the pirates of this period displayed a consciousness of kind which enforced communal bonds. This consciousness of kind was further enforced through visual symbolism, attitude and mind-set. Pirate culture, in certain cases, also granted a level of acceptance and equality to those for whom English society would not; as evidenced by the cases of the female pirates, Mary Read, and Anne Bonny. Such cultural traits, and acceptance, then, along with the pirate's own social order, thus made the piratical society socially and culturally different from that of England. The second part of this thesis will now explore this social and cultural difference, in order to give a full understanding of how alternative this society actually was.

Part B: The Radical and Alternative Society of the Pirate

The Alternative Social Order of the Pirate

Having escaped the social existence of maritime labour, the pirates of this era created a new social world for themselves aboard the pirate ship; a world with an alternative social order. This alternative social order was deliberately designed to provide against the abuses of power which had plagued the sailor's existence, and it therefore differed greatly from that of the merchant and naval ship; the social order based on an authoritative and hierarchical system, in which a powerful minority of captains and officers governed and dictated the existence of a largely powerless, labouring-class majority. As such, the pirate's alternative social order posed a direct challenge to the accepted social order which was enforced by captains and officers aboard merchant and naval vessels. Furthermore, as the social order of the merchant and naval vessel was the maritime representative of England's land-based social order, the pirate's alternative social world therefore challenged the accepted social norms of English society as a whole. Indeed, the social order of the pirate ship was a radical departure from the order of conventional society; it was an alternative order deliberately constructed with egalitarianism in mind; an order of democracy and equality. Of course, not all historians agree with this view. As already mentioned, Earle has argued that those who have taken this view are guilty of infusing their work with fantasy, and of seeking to emphasise radicalism, as a result of their own radical persuasion.[305] However, by using primary sources as evidence, such as Snelgrave's account of his capture by pirates, contemporary pamphlets which give accounts of pirate trials, *The Boston News-Letter*, and Johnson's *History*, this chapter will show that this radical and egalitarian order was far from fantasy. Indeed, this evidence will demonstrate that the pirates of this period did, indeed, create a radical and alternative social order for themselves.

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[305] Peter Earle, *The Pirate Wars* (London, 2004), pp. 3 – 4, 130.

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In opposition to the system of hierarchical authority aboard merchant and naval vessels, and in order to provide against the abuses which often occurred as a result of such a system, pirates created an egalitarian system of governance which involved the whole crew collectively. Unlike aboard merchant and naval ships, where decisions affecting the crew were often made solely by the captain and without consultation with others, pirate ships referred all major decisions to a pirate 'council'. This was an ancient custom in which the captain consulted the whole crew on all major decisions by way of a vote. Every man would have one vote, and the decision would be determined by the outcome.[306] Evidence of the use of this council is given in a pamphlet that was published in Boston, in 1718. The pamphlet, titled *The Trials of Eight Persons Indited for Piracy &c. Of whom Two were Acquitted, and the Rest found Guilty*, gives an account of the trial of several members of Sam Bellamy's crew.[307] During the trial, Thomas Davis stated that aboard the pirate ship 'the company was called together to *Consuls*, and each Man to give his Vote'.[308] This system ensured equality amongst pirates, and as such it was also responsible for the regulation of captains, ensuring that they too were subject to this egalitarian governance.[309] Indeed, the captain was not awarded any special privileges aboard a pirate ship and in many ways he was equal to the crew, as the slave-ship captain William Snelgrave had discovered while being held captive after being taken by pirates in the Sierra Leone River in 1719. Snelgrave observed that at night 'every one lay rough, as they called it, that is, on the Deck; the Captain himself not being allowed a Bed'.[310]

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[306] Marcus Rediker, 'Life under the Jolly Roger', *The Wilson Quarterly (1976-)*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (1988), pp. 158 – 160; Rediker, *Villains*, pp. 68 – 70.
[307] *The Trials of Eight Persons Indited for Piracy &c. Of whom Two were Acquitted, and the Rest found Guilty* (Boston, 1718), in *BPGA*, Vol. 2, pp. 293 – 319.
[308] An account of the statement given by Thomas Davis during his trial, in *The Trials of Eight Persons Indited for Piracy &c. Of whom Two were Acquitted, and the Rest found Guilty* (Boston, 1718), in *BPGA*, Vol. 2, p. 318.
[309] Marcus Rediker, 'Life under the Jolly Roger', *The Wilson Quarterly (1976-)*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (1988), pp. 158 – 160; Rediker, *Villains*, pp. 68 – 70.
[310] William Snelgrave, *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave-Trade* (1734, reprinted London, 1971), p. 217.

Captains were elected by their crew, and were chosen because of their suitability for the job; on account of their bravery, or the skills of navigation they possessed.[311] But they did not, however, have absolute authority like on a merchant vessel. Johnson explains that pirates, 'by their own Laws',[312] only allowed their captains to have absolute power when the pirate ship was '*fighting*, *chasing*, or *being chased*',[313] however, 'in all other Matters whatsoever',[314] he was 'governed by a Majority'.[315] This governance also ensured that just as he was elected by the crew, he could also be deposed by the crew. However, it was not only captains who were elected, as Snelgrave discovered during his time as captive. In a written account of his capture, contained within *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave-Trade*, published in 1734, Snelgrave explained that 'the Captain of a Pirate Ship, is chiefly chosen … Besides him, they chuse another principal Officer, whom they call *Quarter-master*'.[316] Furthermore, even some of the minor officers, such as the bosun and bosun's mate were also elected. Thus, just like captains, quartermasters, and any other elected officers could also be deposed by the pirate council.[317]

Officers could be removed and replaced for various reasons. According to Johnson, Charles Vane was deposed of his captaincy, replaced by the quartermaster, and branded 'with the Name of Coward'[318] for refusing to engage with a French man-of-war. Given Johnson's propensity for sensationalism, the actual branding of Vane as a coward, may or may not have been true. However, Johnson's claim, that Vane was deposed of his captaincy and replaced by the quartermaster, is certainly true. Indeed, it can be corroborated by another primary source of evidence; an account of the trial of the pirate Robert Deal, one of Vane's crew members, which featured in a pamphlet titled *The Tryals of Captain John Rackam, and other Pirates … Who were all Condemn'd for Piracy, at the*

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[311] Rediker, 'Life under the Jolly Roger', p. 159.
[312] Defoe, *General History*, p. 139.
[313] Ibid. p. 139.
[314] Ibid. p. 139.
[315] Ibid. p. 139.
[316] Snelgrave, *A New Account*, p. 199.
[317] Joel Baer, *Pirates of the British Isles* (Stroud, 2005), pp. 207 – 208.
[318] Defoe, *General History*, p. 139.

Town of St. Jago de la Vega, in the Island of Jamaica, on Wednesday and Thursday the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Days of November 1720. As also, the Tryals of Mary Read and Anne Bonny, alias Bonn, on Monday the 28th Day of the said Month of November, at St. Jago de la Vega aforesaid, published in 1721.[319] A witness in the trial, named Hosea Tisdell, claimed that 'the Quarter-Master, being made Captain of their Brigantine, they turn'd out *Charles Vane*'.[320] Such evidence also suggests, therefore, that Johnson was correct when he claimed that captains did not have absolute authority, and were indeed, governed by a majority.

This egalitarian system also provided for certain rules and regulations to be put in place in order to keep discipline and aid harmony aboard ship. When a new captain was elected, or before setting out at the start of a voyage, written 'articles' were drawn up, discussed, and agreed upon by the crew. These articles set out the rules of the ship with regard to conduct, discipline, distribution of plunder, distribution of food, allocation of duties, allocation of authority, and any other rules and regulations which were deemed to be necessary.[321] According to an edition of *The Boston News-Letter* that was published in August, 1723, the articles that were drawn up by Edward Low and his crew aimed to prevent fighting amongst one another by stating that 'He that shall be found guilty of taking up any Unlawful Weapon on Board ... so as to Strike or Abuse one another in any regard, shall suffer what Punishment the Captain and Majority of the Company shall think fit'.[322] Success in battle often depended on discipline and sobriety, and thus another article stated that 'He that shall be guilty of Drunkenness in time of Engagement, shall suffer what Punishment the

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[319] *The Tryals of Captain John Rackam, and other Pirates … Who were all Condemn'd for Piracy, at the Town of St. Jago de la Vega, in the Island of Jamaica, on Wednesday and Thursday the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Days of November 1720. As also, the Tryals of Mary Read and Anne Bonny, alias Bonn, on Monday the 28th Day of the said Month of November, at St. Jago de la Vega aforesaid* (Jamaica, 1721), in *BPGA*, Vol. 3, pp. 7 – 66.
[320] Deposition of Hosea Tisdell during the trial of Robert Deal in *The Tryals of Captain John Rackam, and other Pirates … Who were all Condemn'd for Piracy, at the Town of St. Jago de la Vega, in the Island of Jamaica, on Wednesday and Thursday the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Days of November 1720. As also, the Tryals of Mary Read and Anne Bonny, alias Bonn, on Monday the 28th Day of the said Month of November, at St. Jago de la Vega aforesaid* (Jamaica, 1721), in *BPGA*, Vol. 3, p. 36.
[321] Rediker, 'Life under the Jolly Roger', p. 159; Peter Earle, *The Pirate Wars* (London, 2004), pp. 172 – 174.
[322] *The Boston News-Letter* (August 1st to August 8th, 1723), in *BPGA*, Vol. 1, p. 358.

Captain and Majority of the Company shall think fit'.[323] However, Low's articles were not all about discipline and inhibition. Indeed, one article stated that 'He that sees a sail first, shall have the best Pistol or Small Arm aboard of her'.[324]

The distribution of plunder was also regulated by these articles, making clear what each pirate could expect when a prize was taken. Plunder was usually distributed using an agreed share system which respected those aboard who possessed certain skills or held more responsibility in their duties.[325] Thus, the articles of Low and his crew, that were published in *The Boston News-Letter*, also stated that 'The Captain is to have two full Shares; the Master is to have one Share and one Half; The Doctor, Mate, Gunner and Boatswain, one Share and one Quarter'.[326] All others aboard were usually allocated approximately one share, respectively.[327] Although shares were not equal with officers and skilled men earning the greater shares, it was nevertheless an exercise in fairness, as this share system was agreed upon by the majority of the crew, and thus illustrates that pirates respected and recognised the value of those amongst them that were skilled or had more duty and responsibility.[328] This agreed share system was of great importance among pirates, as it guaranteed that everyone got what they were entitled to, unlike aboard merchant and naval vessels where pay could often be short, or indeed, in some cases non-existent.

Not all of the plunder taken was divided amongst the crew, however. A share of what was taken would be put aside in order to provide compensation pay for any pirates who sustained severe and lasting injuries.[329] The articles of Low's crew, published in *The Boston News-Letter* in August, 1723, serve as evidence of this rudimentary welfare system. They state that 'He that shall have the Misfortune to lose a Limb in time of Engagement, shall have the Sum of Six hundred pieces of Eight, and

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[323] Ibid. p. 358.
[324] Ibid. p. 358.
[325] Rediker, "Under the Banner of King Death", pp. 210 – 211.
[326] *The Boston News-Letter* (August 1st to August 8th, 1723), in *BPGA*, Vol. 1, p. 358.
[327] Rediker, "Under the Banner of King Death", p. 210.
[328] Ibid. pp. 210 – 211.
[329] Rediker, 'Life under the Jolly Roger', p. 160.

remain aboard as long as he shall think fit'.[330] This basic system of welfare 'attempted to guard against debilities caused by accidents, to protect skills, and to promote loyalty within the group'.[331] It also provided both an incentive for sailors to join a pirate crew, and the peace of mind to fight with a full heart for that crew, knowing that should they be injured during battle, they would receive compensation.[332] Indeed, even the crown recognised the power of such an incentive, and after 1700, similar welfare schemes were introduced aboard merchant and naval ships in a bid to combat the sailor's reluctance to defend his ship against pirate attack.[333]

The man who was mainly responsible for ensuring that these articles were adhered to was the quartermaster. Although the quartermaster was a minor officer aboard a merchant ship, aboard a pirate ship he was elevated in status and given more power; an elected officer chosen to speak on behalf of the crew and to protect their interests.[334] Baer explains that the quartermaster 'who spoke for the 'people' of the ship, did ... have more power than the captain when the ship was not in pursuit or in battle'.[335] Evidence of this was given during a pirate trial that took place in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1718. A printed account of this trial is contained within a pamphlet, titled *The Tryals of Major Stede Bonnet, and other Pirates*, published in 1719. According to this printed account, Judge Trott, while questioning the boatswain Ignatius Pell, asked whether or not Bonnet was 'Commander in Chief',[336] to which Pell replied that 'He went by that Name; but the Quarter-Master had more Power than he'.[337] Pell's answer thus serves as evidence of the power entrusted to the quartermaster within the social world of the pirate. Indeed, the quartermaster was responsible for ensuring the fair distribution of plunder, arguably one of the most important responsibilities aboard a pirate vessel. During a piracy trial which took

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[330] *The Boston News-Letter* (August 1st to August 8th, 1723), in *BPGA*, Vol. 1, p. 358.
[331] Rediker, "Under the Banner of King Death", p. 211.
[332] Rediker, 'Life under the Jolly Roger', p. 160.
[333] Rediker, *Villains*, pp. 26 – 27, 140.
[334] Earle, *Pirate Wars*, pp. 102, 173; Rediker, "Under the Banner of King Death", pp. 209 – 210.
[335] Baer, 'Editorial Notes', in *BPGA*, Vol. 2, p. 400.
[336] Judge Trott quoted in *The Tryals of Major Stede Bonnet, and other Pirates* (London, 1719), in *BPGA*, Vol. 2, p. 368.
[337] Ignatius Pell quoted in *The Tryals of Major Stede Bonnet, and other Pirates* (London, 1719), in *BPGA*, Vol. 2, p. 368.

place in May, 1717; an account of which is contained within *The Trials of Eight Persons Indited for Piracy*, published in 1718; Peter Hooff stated that aboard the pirate ship 'Whydah', captained by Sam Bellamy, 'Their Money was kept in Chests between Decks without any guard, but none was to take any without the Quarter Masters leave'.[338] In addition to being responsible for the distribution of plunder, however, he was also responsible for the fair distribution of food, and he also acted as both an adjudicator in the settling of disputes amongst the crew, and as a judge in more serious disciplinary trials.[339] Furthermore, Snelgrave explained that aboard a pirate ship, the quartermaster 'has the general Inspection of all Affairs, and often controuls the Captain's Orders: This Person is also to be the first Man in boarding any Ship they shall attack; or go in the Boat on any desperate Enterprize'.[340] This distribution of power, between the captain and quartermaster, was deliberately done in order to provide against the abuses which often occurred aboard merchant vessels as a result of the captain having a monopoly on power.[341]

The pirates of this period thus created their own alternative social world for themselves aboard the pirate ship. Its egalitarianism stripped away the conventional social norms of the period; class structure, and hierarchical authority; and it replaced them with a democratic system of governance whereby every man had a say in his own daily existence, and was thus, in effect, responsible for his own fate. This social order was thus a complete contrast to the social order of the merchant and naval vessel, and to the English social order they represented. Indeed, the English social order preserved and enforced a system in which the upper classes retained power and accumulated wealth at the expense of the lower classes. Botting has explained that in '1688, by one scholar's estimate, 75 per cent of Britain's national income went to barely 20 per cent of her population. And while the gentry enjoyed their silks and carriages, … the poor were sent out at the age of seven to labor in the mines and mills for a mere shilling a

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[338] An account of the statement given by Peter Hooff during his trial, in *The Trials of Eight Persons Indited for Piracy &c. Of whom Two were Acquitted, and the Rest found Guilty* (Boston, 1718), in *BPGA*, Vol. 2, p. 319.
[339] Earle, *Pirate Wars*, pp. 102, 173.
[340] Snelgrave, *A New Account*, p. 200.
[341] Rediker, "Under the Banner of King Death", pp. 209 – 210.

week'.[342] This was thus an oppressive and exploitative system in which 'the lower classes … were considered little more than slaves to despotic masters'.[343] At sea, this system was preserved and enforced by captains and officers who maintained the oppressive social order of England aboard their vessels, and oversaw the exploitation of the maritime labourer, in order to continue capitalist accumulation.

Given this, Rediker has argued that by creating an alternative social order aboard the pirate ship, the pirates of this era were defiantly challenging the social order of the merchant and naval ship; a social order which enforced class oppression. Piracy can therefore be seen, at least in part, as a defiant social protest against the conventions of an oppressive social order. Rediker's pirates were not only violent sea robbers, but violent sea robbers with a social-revolutionary motive; the creation of a new and just social order based on egalitarianism.[344] However, while the pirates of this era may indeed have been mounting a social-revolutionary challenge to the existing order, they were still, nevertheless, also motivated by plunder. Indeed, Rankin has stated that 'a single voyage in a pirate ship might gain a man a greater fortune than a lifetime of honest toil'.[345] At a time when a person could be hanged for stealing the smallest of amounts, he may as well risk the same fate for stealing enough to make him rich.[346] According to Johnson, the pirate Bartholomew Roberts expressed this sentiment, when he compared a life of honest employment, in which there was '*low Wages, and hard Labour*',[347] to a piratical life of '*Plenty and Satiety*',[348] and asked rhetorically '*who would not ballance Creditor on this Side, when all the Hazard that is run for it, at worst, is only a sower Look or two at choaking*'.[349] Piracy was thus a profitable alternative to labouring in the legitimate maritime trades, and one which many sailors believed was worth risking their lives for. Indeed, Leeson, while acknowledging that 'greater

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[342] Douglas Botting, *The Pirates* (Amsterdam, 1978), p. 31.
[343] Ibid. p. 31.
[344] Rediker, "Under the Banner of King Death", pp. 214 – 215, 226 – 227.
[345] Hugh F. Rankin, *The Golden Age of Piracy* (New York, 1969), p. 23.
[346] Botting, *The Pirates*, p. 31.
[347] Defoe, *General History*, p. 244.
[348] Ibid. p. 244.
[349] Ibid. p. 244.

liberty, power sharing, and unity did prevail'[350] amongst pirate crews, has nevertheless argued that the opportunity for great financial gain was, in fact, the main motivation behind a sailor's decision to turn pirate.[351]

Leeson has argued that a pirate crew was essentially a criminal organisation engaged in a joint profit-seeking venture. In order for this criminal organisation to be successful, internal harmony was needed, with every member of this organisation cooperating fully to achieve its end goal; plunder.[352] Pirates therefore 'needed to avoid as many opportunities for violent conflict that could erupt into fighting and tear their criminal organization apart as possible'.[353] Leeson has therefore argued that the alternative social organisation of the pirate ship was deliberately created to minimise internal conflict, and ensure cooperation. The ship's articles, which were agreed upon collectively, regulated behaviour and ensured this cooperation. All major decisions were put to the council, an authority which, again, ensured that all major decisions, including those concerning the election, regulation, and deposition of captains, were made democratically, thus minimising discord. The regulation of plunder was also done with internal harmony in mind. Money, not surprisingly, had the potential to be dangerously divisive amongst pirates. Pay inequalities could be seen as unfair; breeding tension, jealously, and anger that could lead to quarrels, violence and the break-up of the company. To provide against this, the share system was agreed upon, and apart from those who had a larger share by agreement, the majority of the crew were allocated approximately the same share each.[354] This also had the added advantage of securing cooperation by binding the crew financially. Indeed, Leeson has argued that if the majority of the crew received approximately the same share, then 'they were more likely to agree about whether to continue … or retire their expedition. This was important because it ensured that most pirates

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[350] Peter T. Leeson, *The Invisible Hook: The Hidden Economics of Pirates* (Woodstock, 2009), p. 11.
[351] Ibid. pp. 11 – 14.
[352] Ibid. pp. 11 – 14, 52 – 53.
[353] Ibid. p. 69.
[354] Ibid. pp. 11, 20, 27 – 33, 63 – 70.

engaged in an ongoing plundering expedition had their hearts in it and would therefore exert full effort, improving the crew's chance of success'.[355]

The alternative egalitarian social order which prevailed aboard the pirate ship was, then, according to Leeson, not the end goal of piracy, but the means by which to achieve the end goal.[356] However, while he does argue that financial gain was the leading motivation behind piracy, and that unity, liberty, and shared power were means to achieve a goal, rather than the actual goal itself, he nevertheless concedes that 'This isn't to say idyllic notions never motivated pirates'.[357] Moreover, he has also acknowledged that Rediker's social-revolutionary argument is certainly a persuasive one.[358] Thus, it could be argued that a more adequate interpretation would be one that encompassed both of these theories. Indeed, it would be reasonable to suggest that the social organisation of the pirate ship was actually created in order to fit both purposes; social and economic. Once a sailor had turned pirate, and left maritime labour behind, he had made the transition from one society to another. As such, not only had he left behind the culture and social order of conventional society, but he had also left behind the means of subsistence that was available to him while in that society; employment which gave him money to survive. With conventional means no longer open to him, the pirate therefore had to rely on unconventional means of subsistence; parasitical predation. Plunder thus became the pirate's 'conventional' means of subsistence, and therefore essential for survival. The successful pursuit of this plunder was thus dependent on a cooperative and harmonious crew, and it therefore stands to reason that the social order of the pirate ship was designed with this in mind. However, as many sailors chose to turn pirate to escape the class structure and hierarchical authority of the merchant and naval ship; a social order in which they were very much the victims of unjust treatment; they would not have wanted to leave one oppressive social order, only to go into another.

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[355] Ibid. p. 69.
[356] Ibid. pp. 11, 70.
[357] Ibid. p. 11.
[358] Ibid. p. 11.

The pirates of this period therefore created a social order that was designed to not only aid the pursuit of plunder, but also to be in deliberate contrast with that of the merchant and naval ship, and therefore, with that of England. Indeed, this was a social order which by its very nature distinguished itself from that of English society; the hierarchical structure which fostered social and economic injustice, and the oppression of the lower classes. As such, those men who chose to turn pirate and live within this social order, thus chose to distinguish themselves from English society, and in doing so became part of a new, and separate alternative society. However, the separate and alternative status of this society was not based solely on the social order of the pirate ship. Indeed, societies are usually distinguished from one another not just by social order, but also by culture, and the alternative society of the pirate was no different. Indeed, a distinct culture also developed amongst the pirates of this period; a culture which strengthened communal bonds, and also gave them a unique communal identity. As such, this culture will now be explored, in order to illustrate its importance for the alternative and separate nature of this criminal community.

Pirate Culture

Culture is an important part of any society. Indeed, societies are defined and distinguished from one another by their distinctive cultural traits; their customs, behaviours, and beliefs. Culture is what gives societies their individual status; their own unique identity which sets them apart from other societies. Thus it can be argued that in order for any social group to be classed as an individual and separate social entity, different from any other, it must therefore have its own distinctive culture. Given this, in order for the alternative society of the pirate to be truly classed as 'alternative'; as a separate and distinct society; it should therefore have had its own culture which defined it as such.

By using evidence from various primary sources; contemporary newspapers and journals, pamphlets which contain accounts of pirate trials, and correspondence to the Council of Trade and Plantations, amongst others; this chapter will thus demonstrate that this society did indeed have its own distinct culture, and in doing so it will give confirmation of its separate and alternative status.

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In August 1723, *The Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post* published a particularly gruesome account of a fishing boat and two whale-boats which were taken by pirates. The article reported that a pirate vessel took a 'Fishing-Boat of Block Island, they cut off the Master's Head, and threaten'd to do so by the Masters of all the Ships they should take hereafter. Another took two Whale-Boats off Rhode Island, they ripp'd up the Body of one of the Masters, and took out his Entrails, cut off the Ears of the other, and made him broil and eat them'.[359] It is probable that the two incidents reported were perpetrated by the pirate Edward Low and his crew, as an almost identical account of events is given, and attributed, to Low in

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[359] *The Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post* (August 10th, 1723), in *BPGA*, Vol. 1, p. 305.

Johnson's *History*.[360] Low was a particularly violent pirate, and was described by Governor Hart, in a letter to the Council of Trade and Plantations in 1724, as a man of 'barbarity and bloodthirsty temper'.[361] However, Low was not unique in his violence toward merchant captains. In March, 1726, *The Boston Gazette* reported that Captain Lyne, who was a former consort of Captain Spriggs, 'confessed upon his Tryal, that he had killed 37 Masters of Vessels ... during the Time of his Piracy'.[362] This violence against captains was very much a part of the alternative culture which had developed amongst pirates during the golden age's final phase of Atlantic piracy. Indeed, such actions made the pirates of this era markedly different from any which had come before. Although violence, torture, and the threat of it, had always been a necessary in piracy; a tool used when met with resistance to plundering; a great deal of the violence used against captains in this era was fuelled by revenge, and the pirate's own sense of justice.[363] As with the creation of the alternative social order of the pirate ship, the violence used against captains was very much a reaction to the cruel and unjust treatment that the pirates had received from them, during their previous lives as maritime labourers. For many sailors, piracy thus provided both an escape from the barbarity of cruel captains, and also a means by which they could gain revenge for this barbarity; revenge through reciprocal violence. Through the use of this violence the pirates were thus able to gain redress for the injustice which they had suffered, and this was clearly illustrated with the pirate 'custom' of administering the 'Distribution of Justice'; a custom unique to the pirates of this period.[364]

Upon the seizing of a merchant ship, the pirates would make an enquiry into the character of the captain of the vessel. The sailors aboard the merchant ship would be asked whether or not their captain was a

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[360] Defoe, *General History*, p. 334.
[361] Quote taken from a description of Low's barbarity, based on an account given by Nicholas Lewis, Low's former Quarter Master, contained within a letter from Governor Hart to the Council of Trade and Plantations, March 25, 1724, *CSPC, 1724 – 1725*, p. 72.
[362] *The Boston Gazette* (March 21st to March 28th, 1726), in *BPGA*, Vol. 1, p. 322.
[363] John C. Appleby, *Under The Bloody Flag: Pirates of the Tudor Age* (Stroud, 2009), p. 19; Earle, *Pirate Wars*, pp. 33, 126.
[364] Rediker, *Villains*, pp. 86 – 87; Earle, *Pirate Wars*, p. 176.

decent and just man, and whether or not he treated them well. If the crew replied that their captain was a good man who treated them fairly, the captain would then be treated kindly. However, if the crew replied that their captain was a barbaric and cruel man, then the pirates would administer what was known as the 'Distribution of Justice'. This was the pirate's own brand of violent justice, in which captains were tortured using a variety of horrific methods. One such method involved a captain being stripped naked and forced to run amongst the pirate crew, while being stabbed and pricked repeatedly with sail-needles. Once the captain was sufficiently wounded and bloody, he would then be put into a cockroach-infested sugar cask, covered with a blanket and left to bleed.[365] Another method, described in *The British Journal* in 1724, was known as the 'sweat'. This torture took place between decks, and involved a circle of lighted candles being placed 'round the Mizen-Mast, and about twenty five Men surround it with Points of Swords, Penknives, Compasses, Forks, &c. in each of their Hands: Culprit enters the Circle; the Violin plays a merry Jig, and he must run for about ten Minutes, while each Man runs his Instrument into his Posteriors'.[366]

The slave-ship captain William Snelgrave had first-hand experience of this form of piratical justice when, as aforementioned, he was taken by pirates in the Sierra Leone River in 1719. Upon being taken by Captain Thomas Cocklyn and his crew, Snelgrave stated that he was attacked by the Quartermaster before the Boatswain endeavoured to beat out his brains with the butt-end of a pistol.[367] However, this beating stopped when members of Snelgrave's crew 'cried out aloud, "For God's sake don't kill our Captain, for we never were with a better Man".[368] Cocklyn then told Snelgrave 'you will answer truly to all such Questions as I shall ask you: otherwise you shall be cut to pieces; but if you tell the Truth, and your Men make no Complaints against you, you shall be kindly used'.[369]   Luckily for Snelgrave, his crew did indeed give a good account of their captain, and he was in the main treated kindly as a result. Snelgrave stated that Cocklyn's

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[365] Rediker, *Villains*, pp. 86 – 87; Earle, *Pirate Wars*, pp. 175 – 176.
[366] *The British Journal* (August 8th, 1724), in *BPGA*, Vol. 1, p. 312.
[367] Snelgrave, *A New Account*, pp. 205 – 207.
[368] Ibid. p. 207.
[369] Ibid. p. 212.

consort, Howel Davis, expressed how ashamed he was to hear of the way in which Snelgrave had been treated upon capture.[370] With reference to Cocklyn and his crew, he told Snelgrave that 'they should remember, their Reasons for going a pirating were to revenge themselves on base Merchants, and cruel Commanders of Ships'.[371] Such reciprocal violence was not only used for the punishment of cruel captains however. Many pirates carried out revenge attacks in order to avenge the imprisonment or hanging of fellow pirates.[372]

In 1718, *The Boston News-Letter* reported that, after taking the ship 'Protestant Caesar', the pirate Edward Teach told the ship's captain William Wyer that 'he would burn his Ship because she belonged to Boston, adding he would burn all Vessels belonging to New England for Executing the six Pirates at Boston'.[373] According to the deposition of a mariner named Samuel Cooper, contained within correspondence sent from Lieutenant Governor Bennett to the Council of Trade and Plantations in 1718, when Charles Vane and his crew took several vessels which belonged to Bermuda 'They beat the Bermudians and cut away their masts upon account of one Thomas Brown who was (some time) detain'd in these Islands upon suspicion of piracy'.[374] The pirate Bartholomew Roberts also issued threats regarding the loss of his ship, and the treatment of some of his men, in a letter written to Lieutenant General Mathew, dated 27th September 1720. Expressing his intentions, Roberts angrily wrote: 'The *Royall Rover* you have already burnt and barbarously used some of our men ... and for revenge you may assure yourselves'.[375] He then continued with a further threat regarding one particular pirate who had been imprisoned: 'that poor fellow you now have in prison at Sandy point ... use that man as an honest man ... if we hear any otherwise you may expect not

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[370] Ibid. p. 225.

[371] Ibid. p. 225.

[372] David Cordingly, *Life Among the Pirates: The Romance and the Reality* (London, 1999), p. 154.

[373] *The Boston News-Letter* (June 9th to June 16th, 1718), in *BPGA*, Vol. 1, p. 293.

[374] Deposition of the mariner Samuel Cooper, from the crew of the 'Diamond', contained within correspondence from Lieutenant Governor Bennett to the Council of Trade and Plantations, May 31, 1718, *CSPC, 1717 – 1718*, p. 263.

[375] Letter sent from the pirate Bartholomew Roberts to Lieutenant General Mathew, September 27, 1720, contained within correspondence from Governor Hamilton to the Council of Trade and Plantations, October 3, 1720, *CSPC, 1720 – 1721*, p. 169.

to have quarters to any of your Island'.[376] Such acts of reprisal violence illustrated the sense of communal identity which had developed amongst the pirates of this period.[377] It was, as Rediker has stated, 'truly a case of hanging together or being hanged separately'.[378] Indeed, these pirates were part of an exclusive community; a community created in reaction to, and bonded by, their shared seafaring origin. Just as this seafaring origin had ramifications for the alternative social order they created, it also had ramifications for the nature of piratical violence. Indeed, the barbaric treatment they received from captains fostered a desire for vengeance and justice, and this desire led to the unique custom of the 'Distribution of Justice'. The shared experience of cruel treatment and social injustice also created a consciousness of kind amongst them; a consciousness of kind which led to the pirate's willingness to avenge the imprisonment and execution of his fellow pirates by engaging in reprisal violence. Thus, for the pirates of this period, violence became more than just a tool to be used when faced with resistance while plundering. Indeed, it became a positive source of empowerment for them; a means to avenge injustice, and a way of enforcing communal bonds; a unique hallmark of their alternative society, and therefore a means of cultural identification. Violence was thus a key part of piratical culture. However, it was not only through revenge that violence served its cultural purpose.

In January 1722, *The Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post* reported that a ship called the 'Irwin' was taken by pirates off the coast of 'Martinico ... That Colonel D'oyly of Montserrat, with his Family, was on Board the said Vessel, and was very much cut and wounded by the Pyrates: That 21 of those Brutes had forc'd a Woman Passenger one after another, and afterwards broke her Back, and flung her into the Sea'.[379] This horrific account of rape and murder also appears in Johnson's *History* and is attributed, albeit with great hesitancy, to the pirate Thomas Anstis and his crew.[380] Johnson explains that Colonel D'oyly received his wounds

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[376] Ibid. p. 169.
[377] Rediker, "Under the Banner of King Death", pp. 219 – 221.
[378] Ibid. p. 220.
[379] *The Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post* (January 13th, 1722), in *BPGA*, Vol. 1, p. 357.
[380] Defoe, *General History*, pp. 288 – 289.

because he endeavoured to intervene and save the woman from this barbarity.[381] Both Johnson's account and *The Weekly Journal* article give no indication of a reason for such excessive violence. There is no mention of the ship's captain being subjected to the 'Distribution of Justice' and there is no mention of any other incidents which may have provoked the pirates to engage in such excessive, violent debauchery. Indeed, these victims were seemingly innocent passengers, and even D'oyly was only attacked because he had tried to intervene. Although other facts may well have been omitted from the two accounts, it nevertheless would seem that this was an unprovoked attack. Anstis and his crew, however, were not the only pirates to engage in such seemingly unwarranted acts of violence.

In 1721, correspondence sent from Lieutenant Governor Bennett to the Council of Trade and Plantations contained news that Roberts and his crew had seized several French sloops off the coast of Saint Lucia, and had severely tortured their crews.[382] The news reported that the 'men they took they barbarously abused some they almost whip't to death others had their ears cut off others they fixed to the yard arms and fired at them as a mark and all their actions look'd like practiceing of cruelty'.[383] In 1724, *The British Journal* published a letter in which its author, Captain Richard Hawkins, gave an account of his own capture by pirates. According to this account, Hawkins, along with other captives, was tortured to provide sadistic pleasure for Captain Francis Spriggs and his crew. The pirates, holding a pistol to Hawkins' head, and pushing a sword to his chest, forced him to eat a dish of candles while they cruelly beat him. After Hawkins had finished eating his meal of wax, the pirates then beat him some more, all for the purpose of their entertainment.[384] Hawkins stated that the other prisoners had 'much the same Fare'.[385]

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[381] Ibid. p. 289.
[382] News sent to Bermuda from Barbados, Antigua, and Jamaica, February 18, 1721, contained within correspondence sent from Lieutenant Governor Bennett to the Council of Trade and Plantations, April 25, 1721, *CSPC, 1720 – 1721*, pp. 294 – 295.
[383] Ibid. p. 295.
[384] *The British Journal* (August 8th, 1724), in *BPGA*, Vol. 1, p. 311; Defoe, *General History*, p. 354.
[385] *The British Journal* (August 8th, 1724), in *BPGA*, Vol. 1, p. 311.

These acts of brutality were seemingly carried out, not for the purpose of revenge or for the 'Distribution of Justice', but for the pirates own sadistic gratification. However, it can be argued that while such acts of cruelty and torture may have served to satisfy a desire for sadistic pleasure, they may also have served a cultural purpose. Indeed, if it can be accepted that in the world of the pirate, violence was embraced as a positive; as a source of empowerment; it therefore follows that the more violent a pirate was, the more positively he was viewed amongst fellow pirates. Thus, a violent and aggressive nature was a positive character trait in the cultural world of the pirate, and through excessive violence a captain could often earn the respect and cultural acceptance from his crew, such as in the case of Thomas Cocklyn who was chosen to be captain 'on account of his Brutality and Ignorance'.[386] Edward Teach, it would seem, also recognised the power of maintaining a ruthless and violent reputation. Johnson claims that an incident occurred in which Teach, without provocation, shot at two of his crew members, resulting in a permanent knee injury for a pirate named Israel Hands.[387] When Teach was asked why he did this, he allegedly replied that 'if he did not now and then kill one of them, they would forget who he was'.[388] Although this account may be fictitious, it would suggest that Johnson was aware of how important violence was for the pirate's alternative culture.

Earle notes however, that pirates displayed a 'wide spectrum of behaviour and personality, from the basically very nice to the extremely unpleasant'.[389] Given this, it would be foolish to suggest that all pirate captains earned their respect through such wanton acts of violence, and that all pirate crews were willing to accept such excessive violence. Indeed, the aforementioned examples possibly reflect the more extreme cases of such deliberate and unprovoked atrocity. Nevertheless, it can be argued that violence for the purpose of its own sake was just as powerful as a tool for cultural adherence as reprisal attacks and the 'Distribution of Justice'. Indeed, excessive violence, whether unprovoked or not was of key

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[386] Snelgrave, *A New Account*, p. 199.
[387] Defoe, *General History*, p. 84.
[388] Ibid. p. 84.
[389] Earle, *Pirate Wars*, p. 165.

significance to the pirates radical cultural identity. Moreover, it served to further enhance the contrast between piratical culture and English culture, as its continual, excessive use greatly contrasted with its declining use in England.

Frank McLynn has stated that in the eighteenth century, London was rife with violence, particularly during the opening decades of the century.[390] 'Cock-fighting, bear-baiting, goose-throwing, bare-knuckle fist-fighting were just some of the popular recreations'.[391] Although the capital, as the hub of the empire, was arguably more violent than other areas of the country, Robert Shoemaker has argued that throughout the rest of England, violence was also common, 'occurring in a range of contexts, including official punishments; the 'correction' of wives, servants and children; popular sports, especially those involving animals; and tavern brawls'.[392] London, then, and indeed, the rest of England, was considerably violent during this period.[393] However, while acknowledging this violence, Shoemaker, along with T. R. Gurr, and Lawrence Stone, have nevertheless argued that the level of violence within England had been declining since the latter half of the middle ages, and continued to do so, albeit with occasional fluctuations, throughout piracy's golden age and after.[394] Such findings are based largely on homicide statistics, as murder represents the most extreme case of violence, and as such, it provides the most accurate statistical data for violent incidents, as bodies were not easily hidden and society was generally eager for prosecution when such cases occurred.[395] Thus, although the use of such data has limitations, as statistics for homicide do not account for all other less severe cases of violence, it can, nevertheless,

[390] Frank McLynn, *Crime and Punishment in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1989), p. 4.
[391] Ibid. p. 4.
[392] Robert Shoemaker, 'Male Honour and the Decline of Public Violence in Eighteenth-Century London', *Social History*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (2001), p. 190.
[393] J. A. Sharpe, *Early Modern England, A Social History, 1550 – 1760* (2nd edn., London, 1997), p. 117; Shoemaker, 'Male Honour', p. 190.
[394] Shoemaker, 'Male Honour', pp. 190 – 208; Robert Shoemaker, *The London Mob: Violence and Disorder in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 2004), pp. 170 – 171; T. R. Gurr, "Historical Trends in Violent Crime: A Critical Review of the Evidence", *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review of Research*, iii (1981), pp. 295 – 353, in Lawrence Stone, 'Interpersonal Violence in English Society 1300 – 1980', *Past & Present*, No. 101 (1983), pp. 22 – 33; Stone, 'Interpersonal Violence', pp. 22 – 33.
[395] Shoemaker, 'Male Honour', pp. 190 – 192; Gurr, "Historical Trends in Violent Crime", pp. 295 – 353, in Stone, 'Interpersonal Violence', pp. 22 – 33.

be argued that they do give some indication of overall patterns of violence.[396]

Thus, while English society was still suffused with violence, the level of this violence was nonetheless declining. Toward the close of piracy's golden age, the gentlemen elite of London were beginning to discard their swords, the principle weapon for murder during this period.[397] The lower classes, too, were also becoming more reluctant to engage in violent behaviour, and they were even becoming proactive in preventing it.[398] Shoemaker has argued that 'they broke up fights and prevented duals whenever they were about to happen'.[399] This culture of declining violence contrasted greatly with pirate culture; a culture which embraced violence as a positive and proactively engaged in it. The pro-violent nature of pirate culture was, therefore, culturally at odds with that of England.

For the pirates of this period then, violence was of key significance for their alternative culture. Indeed, theirs was a culture of defiant revenge, and violence empowered them to exact this revenge. Its excessive use also defiantly contrasted with the culture of conventional society, thus serving to further enhance the pirate's cultural separation from England. Violence was also perceived as a positive character trait in the world of the pirate, and its use thus adhered to the pirate's own sense of cultural ideals. Through reciprocal violence and avenging one another, the pirates of this period also displayed a unique consciousness of kind which enforced their communal bond. This consciousness of kind, however, was not only displayed through violence. Indeed, arguably the most prominent symbol of pirate unity was the distinctive flag which they sailed under, known as the 'Jolly Roger'. The use of such flags began to emerge during the latter decades of the sixteenth century. Francis Drake had flown a black flag while in the Caribbean in 1585, and black and red flags were flown by English privateering vessels and men-of-war during the Anglo-Spanish war.[400]

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[396] Shoemaker, *The London Mob*, p. 171; Shoemaker, 'Male Honour', pp. 191 – 192; J. A. Sharpe, 'The History of Violence in England: Some Observations', *Past & Present*, No. 108 (1985), p. 208.
[397] Shoemaker, *The London Mob*, p. 174.
[398] Ibid. p. 295.
[399] Ibid. p. 295.
[400] Appleby, *Under The Bloody Flag*, p. 18.

However, by the final phase of golden-age piracy, the flag had evolved into a powerful emblem which represented the alternative society of the pirate. Their design varied from crew to crew, some were red or 'bloody' in colour, others were white, but the most common colour was black, and they were usually emblazoned with white images. These images varied from flag to flag, but were usually representations of skulls, skull-and-crossbones, or full skeletons, along with a weapon, such as a dart or cutlass, and also an hour-glass. These flags, adorned with such frightening images, were designed, first and foremost, to strike fear into the hearts of those who the pirates preyed upon. However, they also acted as a symbol of cultural identity.[401]

According to Rediker, 'the flag was very widely used; no fewer, and probably a great many more, than twenty-five hundred men sailed under it'.[402] Given this, he has argued that 'So general an adoption indicates an advanced state of group identification'.[403] Support for this argument can be found in observations made by Snelgrave. Indeed, Snelgrave observed that when Howel Davis' pirate vessel first sailed into the Sierra Leone River, it had the effect of putting the other pirates who were already there 'into some fear, believing at first it was a Man of War: But upon discovering her black Flag at the Main-top-mast-head … they were easy in their Minds, and a little time after, saluted one another with their Cannon'.[404] This evidence suggests then, that for the pirates of this period the Jolly Roger acted as a symbol of communal identification; a symbol of social unity. By choosing to adopt this flag pirate crews thus showed a clear affinity with one another; an affinity which expressed the consciousness of kind which had developed amongst them.

However, in addition to being an emblem of social unity, it was also a symbolic expression of pirate mentality. Indeed, the images which adorned the flag, while intended to terrify, also represented aspects of the seaman's social and cultural experience. The skeleton represented 'King Death', and the skull-and-crossbones, which was known as a 'death's head', was a

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[401] Defoe, *General History*, p. 119; Rediker, *Villains*, p. 98; Hugh F. Rankin, *The Golden Age of Piracy* (New York, 1969), pp. 32 – 33.
[402] Rediker, *Villains*, p. 98.
[403] Ibid. p. 98.
[404] Snelgrave, *A New Account*, pp. 198 – 199.

symbol used to indicate a death within a ship's logbook. Skulls and skeletons therefore represented the omnipresence of death which the sailor lived with on a daily basis. The weapons represented the violent and brutal nature of the sailor's existence, and the hour-glasses represented the limited time he had in a life filled with danger and violence.[405] However, death, violence, and limited time were also omnipresent within the world of the pirate. Indeed, as wanted outlaws with bounties offered for their apprehension, pirates were themselves preyed upon, and their piratical life was usually a short one, which often ended on the gallows.[406] Thus in addition to representing aspects of the sailor's existence, and terrifying prey, the images that adorned the black flag also 'eloquently bespoke the pirates' own consciousness of themselves as preyed upon in turn'.[407] By choosing to place these symbols on their flags, however, the pirates took such negative aspects, and they embraced them. Indeed, by adopting these symbols; by sailing under the flag of 'King Death', they not only defiantly refused to bow down to death; they became a vision of death itself; striking fear into the hearts of those who spied them approaching on the horizon.[408] Furthermore, pirates actively cultivated this image throughout their culture.

Pirates promoted themselves as harbingers of death; as a demonic presence; the devil's disciples, damned and hell-bound. Edward Teach, as already explained, allegedly placed 'lighted Matches under his Hat, which appearing on each Side of his Face, his Eyes naturally looking fierce and wild, made him altogether such a Figure, that Imagination cannot form an Idea of a Fury, from Hell, to look more frightful'.[409] According to Johnson, when asked once about whether or not his wife knew the whereabouts of his money, Teach allegedly answered that 'no Body but himself, and the Devil, knew where it was, and the longest Liver should take all'.[410] Teach, it would seem, clearly felt in league with the Devil. If Johnson is to be believed, Teach's crew thought they were too. Those pirates who survived

[405] Rediker, *Villains*, pp. 164 – 168.
[406] Ibid. p. 164; Rediker, "Under the Banner of King Death", pp. 218 – 219, 223; Defoe, *General History*, pp. 78 – 79.
[407] Rediker, "Under the Banner of King Death", p. 223.
[408] Rediker, *Villains*, pp. 168 – 169.
[409] Defoe, *General History*, pp. 84 – 85.
[410] Ibid. p. 85.

the battle with Maynard, that ended Teach's life, allegedly told a tale of a man who was once amongst them during a particular cruise. He 'was seen several Days amongst them, sometimes below, and sometimes upon Deck, yet no Man in the Ship could give an Account who he was, or from whence he came; but that he disappeared a little before they were cast away in their great Ship, but, it seems, they verily believed it was the Devil'.[411]

Pirates thus believed that they sailed with the Devil; with 'King Death'. They faced damnation and they did not fear it. Indeed, when a fire broke aboard the ship that Snelgrave was being held captive on, he heard some of the old hardened pirates give out a 'loud shout upon the Main-deck, with a Huzza, "for a brave blast to go to Hell with," which was repeated several times'.[412] According to an account published in *The Boston News-Letter* in 1720, when Bartholomew Roberts and his crew plundered the 'Samuel', captained by Samuel Cary, they said that 'if it should chance that they should be Attacked by any Superiour power or force, which they could not master, they would immediately put fire with one of their Pistols to their Powder, and go all merrily to Hell together!'[413] Pirates thus revelled in their devilry, and the image that they cultivated for themselves, and it was an important part of their defiant culture. Furthermore, such behaviour served to further alienate pirate culture from the culture of the state. Indeed, by embracing death and the devil in this way, and by wishing to end up in Hell, rather than Heaven, pirate culture actively shunned religion, and in doing so it defied the authority of one of the English Empire's major traditional institutions of social and cultural order; the Church; an institution which, through its sermons and religious instruction, preached obedience to social deference.[414] Indeed, in his pamphlet published in 1723, titled *Useful Remarks. An Essay upon Remarkables in the Way of Wicked Men. A Sermon on the Tragical End, unto which the Way of Twenty-Six Pirates brought them; at New Port on Rhode-Island, July 19, 1723. With an Account of their Speeches, Letters &*

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[411] Ibid. pp. 85 – 86.
[412] Snelgrave, *A New Account*, pp. 270 – 271.
[413] *The Boston News-Letter* (August 15th to August 22nd, 1720), in *BPGA*, Vol. 1, p. 296.
[414] Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age: England, 1603 – 1714* (3rd edn., Harlow, 2003), p. 104; Rediker, *Villains*, p. 135.

Actions, before their Execution, the Boston minister Cotton Mather explained that pirates thus 'bid intolerable *Defiances to Heaven*',[415] and that '*Monstrous Undutifulness* to their Superiors is expressed by them'.[416] By shunning religion, and by aligning itself with the Devil, pirate culture, therefore, further distanced itself from the cultural norm of conventional society, and the system of authority this culture promoted.

The black flag, then, was a powerful emblem of identity and unity. It symbolised an alternative culture suffused with violence, revenge, defiance of death, and one which was charged with its own sense of justice. However, it also symbolised a culture based on egalitarian principle, and one which was willing to grant a certain level of acceptance to those that conventional seafaring culture would not. An example of such acceptance is illustrated by the piratical lives of two female pirates, Mary Read and Anne Bonny, two cross-dressing women whose notoriety stems largely from the sensational account of their lives given in Johnson's *History*. According to Johnson, before Read was born, her mother had been married to a 'Man who used the Sea, who going a Voyage soon after their Marriage, left her with Child, which Child proved to be a Boy'.[417] However, the husband never returned, and Read's mother fell pregnant again with another man's child out of wedlock. In order to conceal the shame of an illegitimate birth from her neighbours and her lost husband's family, she moved away from them. During this time away her son died, and the illegitimate child was born; Mary Read. After several years, and with finances diminishing, Mary's mother opted to disguise her daughter as a boy, and return home, in the hope that she could deceive her mother-in-law into believing that it was her grandson, and thus gain maintenance for the child. The plan was successful, and Mary Read was raised as a male, and continued in this guise as an adult, sailing aboard a man-of-war, and serving as a soldier, before eventually

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[415] Cotton Mather, *Useful Remarks. An Essay upon Remarkables in the Way of Wicked Men. A Sermon on the Tragical End, unto which the Way of Twenty-Six Pirates brought them; at New Port on Rhode-Island, July 19, 1723. With an Account of their Speeches, Letters & Actions, before their Execution* (New London, 1723), in *BPGA*, Vol. 4, p. 175.
[416] Ibid. p. 175.
[417] Defoe, *General History*, p. 153.

ending up as a pirate alongside Anne Bonny, in the crew of Captain John Rackam.[418]

According to Johnson, Bonny, like Read, was also a child of illegitimate birth; her father, an attorney-at-law, was a married man, and her mother was the maid in his house. Her father had disguised her as a boy to avoid public scandal, but when the truth eventually came out, he took Anne and her mother to live in Carolina, and became a successful merchant and plantation owner. As a result of her father's success, Bonny had stood to inherit a considerable fortune, but her chances of receiving this were ruined when she married a poor sailor without her father's consent. Enraged, and disappointed, Bonny's father turned her away, and she subsequently fled to the Caribbean with her husband. It was while in the Caribbean that Bonny met with Captain Rackam, and, after being wooed by him, she left her husband, donned men's clothing, turned pirate, and became the captain's lover.[419]

While such accounts are certainly entertaining, there has yet to be found any additional supporting evidence which can corroborate Johnson's sensational back-stories. As such, this lack of supporting evidence suggests that the majority of the information contained within these two accounts is, more than likely, fictitious. However, while much of the detail may have been fabrication, there is, nonetheless, surviving evidence which confirms that Read and Bonny certainly did exist, and that they did dress as males, and that they also sailed with John Rackam. Indeed, in February 1721, *The Boston Gazette* featured an article which brought attention to news of the hanging of Rackam and ten other pirates in Jamaica. The source of the news was a Captain Lancelot, who had set sail from Jamaica in December, 1720. The article stated that 'Capt. Rackam a Pirate and ten of his Men were Executed there for Piracy and hung up in Chains, two Women who were taken with them were Condemned, but pleaded their Bellies, and nine Men who joined Rackum just before he was taken, were to be Tryed also for Piracy'.[420] Although not named in this article, the two

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[418] Ibid. pp. 153 – 159.
[419] Ibid. pp. 159 – 165.
[420] *The Boston Gazette* (February 6th to February 13th, 1721), in *BPGA*, Vol. 1, p. 320.

women who 'pleaded their Bellies'[421] were Mary Read and Anne Bonny, and a pamphlet, published in Jamaica in 1721, can be used to corroborate this. This pamphlet; titled *The Tryals of Captain John Rackam, and other Pirates … Who were all Condemn'd for Piracy, at the Town of St. Jago de la Vega, in the Island of Jamaica, on Wednesday and Thursday the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Days of November 1720. As also, the Tryals of Mary Read and Anne Bonny, alias Bonn, on Monday the 28th Day of the said Month of November, at St. Jago de la Vega aforesaid*; contains within it, as its title suggests, a printed account of the trial of Mary Read and Anne Bonny.[422] It is, as Baer has pointed out, 'the only source for the few facts we have about the two women pirates'.[423] As such, it is quite reasonable to suggest that this pamphlet provided the inspiration for Johnson's sensational accounts that were to be published in 1724.

The account serves as evidence that both Read and Bonny did 'plead their bellies', or in other words, state that they were pregnant, once they had been sentenced to death. Indeed, the account states that 'After Judgement was pronounced, as aforesaid, both the Prisoners inform'd the Court, that they were both quick with Child, and prayed that Execution of the Sentence might be stayed'.[424] Throughout the account, witness evidence is also given which testifies that these two women were fully-fledged pirates who sailed with Rackam; and that they dressed as males; and that they engaged in attacks on vessels. Indeed, Dorothy Thomas testified that when her canoe was taken by Rackam's sloop, both Read and Bonny 'were then on Board the said Sloop, and wore Mens Jackets, and long Trouzers, and Handkerchiefs tied about their Heads; and that each of them had a Machet and Pistol in their Hands'.[425] Furthermore, they 'cursed and swore at the Men, to murther'[426] her, and argued that 'they should kill her, to prevent her

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[421] Ibid. p. 320.
[422] *The Tryals of Captain John Rackam, and other Pirates … Who were all Condemn'd for Piracy, at the Town of St. Jago de la Vega, in the Island of Jamaica, on Wednesday and Thursday the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Days of November 1720. As also, the Tryals of Mary Read and Anne Bonny, alias Bonn, on Monday the 28th Day of the said Month of November, at St. Jago de la Vega aforesaid* (Jamaica, 1721), in *BPGA*, Vol. 3, pp. 7 – 66.
[423] Baer, 'Introduction to *The Tryals of Captain John Rackam*', in *BPGA*, Vol. 3, p. 2.
[424] *The Tryals of Captain John Rackam*, in *BPGA*, Vol. 3, p. 29.
[425] Ibid. p. 27.
[426] Ibid. p. 27.

coming against them'.[427] Two Frenchmen, John Besneck and Peter Cornelian, also declared that Read and Bonny were with Rackam when he took two other vessels, stating that 'they were very active … and willing to do any Thing; That *Ann Bonny* … handed Gun-powder to the Men, That when they saw any Vessel, gave Chase, or Attacked, they wore Men's Cloaths; and, at other Times, they wore Women's Cloaths; That they did not seem to be kept, or detain'd by Force, but of their own Free-Will and Consent'.[428]

These women were thus accepted as fully-fledged members of their crew, and this acceptance further illustrates the cultural difference between pirate culture and that of the merchant and naval ship. Indeed, seafaring was a male-dominated profession, and one that was rarely open to women during this period. When females did occasionally gain employment in the maritime trades, they were usually disguised as males.[429] Read and Bonny, however, did not have to disguise their sex when amongst their crew; when not attacking vessels 'they wore Women's Cloaths'.[430] Thus, they were accepted members of their crew, despite their gender. However, this example does not mean that all women were automatically accepted amongst pirates. Indeed, according to Johnson, the articles of Bartholomew Roberts stated that women were prohibited to be amongst his crew.[431] However, notwithstanding this, the evidence presented at the trial of Read and Bonny does certainly suggest that acceptance could be earned, despite gender. Indeed, Read and Bonny, no doubt, were accepted amongst pirates because they possessed the necessary character traits needed for cultural acceptance. They were aggressive and violent women, who carried 'Machet and Pistol in their Hands'[432] and advocated 'murther'.[433] They

[427] Ibid. p. 27.
[428] Ibid. p. 28.
[429] Peter Earle, *Sailors: English Merchant Seamen, 1650 – 1775* (London, 1998), p. 101; N. A. M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London, 1988), p. 77; N. A. M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649 – 1815* (London, 2006), pp. 212 – 213, 407.
[430] *The Tryals of Captain John Rackam*, in *BPGA*, Vol. 3, p. 28.
[431] Defoe, *General History*, p. 212.
[432] *The Tryals of Captain John Rackam*, in *BPGA*, Vol. 3, p. 27.
[433] Ibid. p. 27.

joined in with attacks on vessels and they were 'willing to do any Thing'.[434] As already mentioned, a violent and aggressive nature was a positive character trait in the cultural world of the pirate, and therefore through their displays of aggression, and acts of violence, Read and Bonny adhered to piracy's cultural ideals, which thus earned them cultural acceptance. Thus, the case of Read and Bonny illustrates that while women were not accepted as active crew members within the culture of the conventional maritime trades, they could nevertheless earn acceptance and a level of equality within the alternative culture of the pirate.

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The evidence presented in this chapter has demonstrated that a distinct and alternative culture did develop amongst the pirates of this period; a culture with its own unique identity. It was a culture that was charged with its own unique sense of justice; a culture that displayed a consciousness of kind through acts of reciprocal violence, and by hoisting the Jolly Roger; a culture that shunned religion, and espoused defiance of death. It was also a culture that challenged English cultural norms through its pro-violent nature, and its willingness to grant acceptance and equality to females such as Read and Bonny. This culture thus differed markedly from conventional culture. Indeed, it was a distinct culture; a hallmark which distinguished the pirate's society from others, and thus gave it a separate and alternative status.

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[434] Ibid. p. 28.

Conclusion

The expansion of the English Empire into the Americas, and the growth of its overseas colonial trade, based on a rising consumer demand for colonial produced goods such as sugar, tobacco, rice and molasses, fundamentally changed the nature of seafaring, and the lives of those who engaged in it. Indeed, in order to meet the rising consumer demand, the colonies needed a more productive and cost effective labour force, and thus made the transition from using white indentured servants, to enslaved Africans. This resulted in a rise in merchant shipping; shipping needed for the import and export of colonial produced goods, and also to carry enslaved Africans to the colonies so that such goods could be produced, and consumer demand met. Such an increase in merchant shipping also required a great number of seamen to labour aboard these vessels, and as a result, masses of the working class found employment within the maritime trades. While in these trades, however, these working class seamen were subjected to a new social experience. Indeed, the sailor, now employed in long distance colonial trade, spent weeks or even months at sea, confined within an environment fraught with hardship, and danger.

Living and working within such an environment meant that sailors faced the prospect of injury and death on a daily basis. Indeed, death and injury often resulted from the hardship and physical demands of their work, and from undertaking such work in hazardous weather conditions. Disease was also a common killer, especially in the trades which involved sailors spending long periods of time in tropical climates, such as in the slave-trade. Sailors were also vulnerable to attacks from pirates, and also from the ships of enemy nations during periods of war. The sailor's existence was thus filled with hardship and danger. However, it was also filled with violence and cruelty. Indeed, in times of war, many sailors experienced the cruelty of the press, and those who were unfortunate enough to be impressed, may then later fall victim to the dreaded ritual of the 'turnover'. Fighting was common amongst seamen, as was bullying. Cruel games were commonplace, such as the ducking from the yardarm, for those sailors who had never before crossed the Tropic of Cancer, or the Equator, or who

had never entered the Strait of Gibraltar. In addition to the cruelty from fellow seamen, however, maritime labourers were often cheated out of pay and provisions by cruel and deceitful captains. Cruel and barbaric captains were also responsible for inflicting violence upon sailors as a means of punishment; violence that was often not only brutal, and excessive, but also often unwarranted.

Hardship, cruelty, violence and danger, were thus the conditions of the sailor's existence, and living such an existence on a daily basis, for months on end, had significant social and cultural ramifications for the sailor. Such ramifications could be clearly seen when the sailor was back on land and amongst his land-dwelling counterparts. Indeed, not only did the sailor look different, with his skin tanned from foreign climates, his work specific dress, and his unusual gait, but he also behaved different. The sailor on land was wild and drunk, dangerous and violent. Such behaviour was a release of tension by a man who had been conditioned by a dangerous and violent existence. Indeed, the sailor was very much a personification of his dangerous and violent maritime world, and, as this world was beyond the understanding of his land-based contemporaries, his behaviour was therefore also equally incomprehensible to them. Thus, the sailor, while still a member of English society, was nevertheless socially and culturally alien to his land-based contemporaries. The growth of English overseas colonial commerce, and the social conditions which it had created, had therefore resulted in the creation of a seafaring sub-culture within English society.

This harsh and cruel social existence not only had social and cultural ramifications for the sailor, however; it also had social and cultural ramifications for the nature of piracy during the final phase of piracy's golden age. Indeed, the harsh, cruel and unjust treatment of sailors was a major cause of piracy during this period, as evidenced by the claims made by the unknown author of the pamphlet, *Piracy Destroy'd,* published in 1701. The author claimed to have been told by pirates that the reason they turned to piracy was to escape the cruelty of maritime labour; to escape the cruelty of the press, and the brutality of captains who beat them, and

cheated them out of their pay and victuals.[435] Such treatment was thus a major cause of piracy. Furthermore, many pirates felt that their depredations were justified as a result of this treatment, as evidenced by the conversation that took place between the pirate William Fly and the Boston minister Cotton Mather, prior to Fly's execution. Fly stated that '*I shan't own myself Guilty of any Murder. – Our Captain and his Mate used us Barbarously*'.[436]

The growth of England's overseas colonial trade had thus not only created a mass seafaring proletariat, but also a brutal, cruel, and hostile environment for this proletariat; an environment which caused many of them to turn pirate. As such, England's commercial development was thus responsible for a significant change in the social composition of pirate crews. Indeed, as masses of embittered and disgruntled maritime labourers turned pirate to escape their cruel social existence, pirate crews during this period thus became predominantly composed of seafarers who originated from the lower classes of society. This shared social experience made the pirates of this era radically different from any that had come before them. Indeed, this shared social experience became a unifying bond between them, and it also acted as the basis for the creation of an alternative society amongst them; a society based on radical social ideals of equality and egalitarian governance; social ideals that were thus at odds with the authoritative and hierarchical governance of the merchant and naval ship, and the English system of governance they represented.

Earle has denied the existence of this radicalism within the world of the eighteenth-century pirate. Furthermore, he has argued that those historians who seek to emphasise this radicalism, are guilty of infusing their work with fantasy, as a result of their own radical persuasion.[437] However, this thesis has provided primary evidence which proves that the pirates of this period did create a society based on radical social ideals. Indeed, sources such as Captain Charles Johnson's *A General History of the*

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[435] Unknown author, *Piracy Destroy'd: Or, A short Discourse Shewing The Rise, Growth and Causes of Piracy of late; with a sure Method how to put a speedy stop to that growing Evil* (London, 1701), in *BPGA*, Vol. 3, pp. 386 – 389, 393 – 397.
[436] Cotton Mather, *The Vial poured out upon the Sea* (Boston, 1726), p. 21, quoted in Williams, 'Puritans and Pirates', p. 243.
[437] Peter Earle, *The Pirate Wars* (London, 2004), pp. 3 – 4, 130.

Robberies and Murders of the most notorious Pyrates, published in 1724, *The Trials of Eight Persons Indited for Piracy*, published in 1718, William Snelgrave's *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave-Trade*, published in 1734, *The Tryals of Captain John Rackam, and other Pirates*, published in 1721, *The Boston News-Letter*, published in 1723, and *The Tryals of Major Stede Bonnet, and other Pirates*, published in 1719, have shown that an egalitarian system of self-governance prevailed amongst pirates; that all decisions were made collectively, with every pirate having a vote, and therefore a say, in his own destiny. They have shown that the rules and regulations of the pirate ship were discussed and agreed upon by all, and that they took the form of written 'articles'. These articles aided harmony and cooperation, and also regulated the distribution of food and plunder, guaranteeing that everyone got what they were entitled to. This evidence has also shown that aboard a pirate ship, the quartermaster was elevated in status, and the crew granted him power equal to, and sometimes more than, the captain. This evidence has also shown that captains, quartermasters and other officers were elected and also deposed by the crew; proving that power and authority always rested within the collective hands of all.

Such primary sources thus serve as evidence of the radical social order of pirates; a social order which was deliberately designed in contrast to that of the merchant and naval ship. Indeed, unlike aboard merchant and naval ships, every member of the crew was involved in decision making. The power and authority of the captain was also limited, which thus provided against the abuses of power which often occurred aboard merchant and naval vessels. This democratic, egalitarian social order thus contrasted greatly with the social order of merchant and naval ships; the social order based on an authoritative and hierarchical system, whereby a powerful minority of captains and officers governed and dictated the existence of a largely powerless, labouring-class majority. The pirate's social order was therefore a radical one, which challenged the social order of the merchant and naval ship, and, as the social order of these ships replicated and represented the social order of England, the pirate's social order thus also challenged that of England. Thus, although Leeson has

argued that the social organisation of the pirate ship was deliberately designed to minimise discord in order to aid the pursuit of plunder, and indeed, this was no doubt a factor, the evidence, nevertheless, serves as proof that the organisation of the pirate ship was deliberately created to provide the pirates with an alternative social existence; a social existence which gave them a better standard of life than the one they had experienced while living and working within the social order of conventional society.

The evidence gathered from the aforementioned primary sources has thus served to demonstrate that the pirates of this period created a radical social order designed to be in deliberate contrast with that of the merchant and naval ship, and thus, with that of England. Indeed, it was a social order distinct from that of English society, and as such, those sailors who chose to turn pirate and live within this alternative social order, thus chose to distinguish themselves from conventional English society, and they therefore became part of a separate and alternative society. However, the separate and alternative status of this society was not only defined by its alternative social order. Indeed, it can be argued that in order for a social group to be truly defined as a separate society, it must be in possession of its own distinct culture. This thesis has therefore also provided primary evidence which has demonstrated that this piratical society not only had its own alternative social order, but also its own alternative culture. Indeed, by using contemporary newspapers and journals, such as *The Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post*, *The Boston Gazette*, *The British Journal*, and *The Boston News-Letter*, in addition to pamphlets, such as *Useful Remarks. An Essay upon Remarkables in the Way of Wicked Men*, published in 1723, and *The Tryals of Captain John Rackam, and other Pirates*, published in 1721, and also Johnson's *History*, published in 1724, Snelgrave's *A New Account*, published in 1734, and various correspondence between officials in the Americas and the Council of Trade and Plantations, this thesis has shown that a distinct and alternative culture developed amongst the pirates of this period. It was a defiant, revenge-filled culture; a culture that displayed a consciousness of kind through acts of vengeance, and by hoisting the black flag. It was also a culture which challenged that of

England through its pro-violent nature, and its unwillingness to embrace religion. It also challenged cultural norms by its willingness to grant acceptance and equality to women such as Mary Read and Anne Bonny.

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The evidence presented in this thesis has demonstrated that the pirates of this period did create for themselves a separate and alternative society; a society with its own radical social order, and its own distinct culture and identity. The radical and alternative society of the golden age pirate was therefore not myth, but reality.

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