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## **"All this Shim-Sham Story of Pyrates is an Impudent Libel upon Great Men": The Suppression of Pirates and the Suppression of Dissent in Walpolean Britain**

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In September 1717, King George I of Great Britain and Ireland issued a royal proclamation calling for the suppression of piracy and offered amnesty for those individuals who would abandon their ways. For decades, pirates were the scourge of the Atlantic, committing the most heinous acts of robbery, murder, and terror at sea. Prior to the king's proclamation, the Royal Navy struggled to maintain control of piracy throughout the West Indies. Plantation owners and merchants in Jamaica sent out a request to London earlier that year, asking for more of the king's vessels to patrol the waters and guard their trade routes. In response, the Admiralty Office wrote that an additional naval presence would achieve little, "as we have reason to believe it will be found difficult to root out the aforesaid Pyrates, which, as it is said, do rather encrease than diminish, so do We not know any more Effectual Method of doing the same than by sending some more of his Majesty's Ships to cruize against them."<sup>1</sup> The War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713) resulted in the expansion of the already extensive British Empire, leaving it as the foremost naval power in Europe. Still, continued pirate operations in the West Indies threatened colonial commerce and undermined the Crown's overseas authority.<sup>2</sup>

Following the death of Queen Anne in 1714 and the ascendancy of George of Hanover to the throne, the Whig party established supremacy over Parliament that would last for almost half a century. However, the Whigs were not without their opponents; conservative Tories comprised a large minority in the House of Commons, secret Jacobites inhabited both England and Scotland, and Catholics in Ireland, while quiescent, persisted as a potential threat to state authority. In an effort to consolidate and extend their power, the Whigs employed a new tactic: utilizing the suppression of piracy as a form of propaganda to intimidate enemies at home by demonstrating the lengths the government was willing to go to eliminate dissent. Though the suppression of piracy itself has been covered extensively within the historiography of pirate studies, this paper will instead focus on how the British government, under Sir Robert Walpole, publicized its anti-piracy campaign through books and newspapers in the public sphere to secure its grip on power as well as the contested use of pirate discourse between the Whig oligarchy and its opposition.

Scholars in the field of maritime piracy have focused primarily on the social organization of pirates and their exploits at sea. Many scholars across various disciplines including sociology, political science, and history have actively contributed to the field, with interdisciplinary approaches being the norm. While an exact timeline outlining the Golden Age of Piracy remains contentious among scholars, many have agreed that the period, 1660-1730, best captures the greater historical implications of piracy in the Early Modern era. Historians have designated 1716-1726 as the peak period of piratical activity in the

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Atlantic world, an era which associated pirates as a swashbuckling cultural phenomenon among popular audiences.

Pirates were rather unique historical anomalies, appearing only when attacking ships for plunder before shortly vanishing with little trace. Their elusiveness only adds to their legend as the most notorious criminals of the high seas. Due to their ambiguity and the conditions of the sea, there is little evidence of biographical information on these mariners, leaving historians to interpret second hand accounts of the pirates in newspapers, literature, and public records. Yet, before one can truly understand the lives and practices of Golden Age pirates, it is first important to recognize the historical context in which they existed. Although the rise of piracy began in the latter half of the seventeenth century, the greatest number of raids took place in the aftermath of the War of the Spanish Succession. At the turn of the eighteenth century, this conflict ravaged Europe over the course of twelve years, with the fighting involving England, France, and Spain over the legitimate succession of the Spanish throne. Charles II of Spain provoked war when he chose his distant relative, the grandson of Louis XIV of France, Philip, to be his heir. England feared that Philip's ascension would tip the already delicate balance of power throughout Europe at the benefit of France. During the war, England commissioned numerous privateers to obstruct Spanish commerce and undermine their war effort. Once the conflict concluded, however, many privateers turned to piracy and set themselves to the West Indies, as they struggled to find employment after the war. Sailors were willing to become criminals in the New World to avoid a life of poverty in Britain.

The foundational source of historical piracy is Captain Charles Johnson's *A General History of the Pyrates*. Originally published in 1724, this large work contains the biographies of the most prominent pirate captains, taken from accounts by sailors who claimed to have been in their service as well as newspapers writing on pirate activity. Though the actual author of *A General History* remains a mystery (Daniel Defoe was once credited for authorship), and much of its content riddled with embellishments and questionable testimonies; this book, nevertheless, remains a quintessential part of scholarly research as it was the first work to ever capture the realities of the pirate lifestyle.

Although pirates were by all accounts some of the most abhorrent individuals to inhabit the Atlantic waters, their social organization indisputably allowed them to consistently plunder so many merchant vessels with such a high rate of success. Being criminals who terrorized the West Indies with violence and robbery, one may question how they were able to function within such large crews without turning on each other. Various scholars have suggested that pirate crews operated on a loosely democratic system of governance with the captain of each ship elected or deposed by a majority vote. The political freedom granted by piracy eliminated the need to answer to royal authority. Within this system, shipmates acted of their own free will, but were willing to work under the leadership of a captain, who the crew relied on during combat situations to ensure the successful capture of prizes. The captain could not exercise his authority outside of battle, which allowed the crew to decide collectively on where they should sail and which ships they should give chase. When taking a prize, the value of a ship's cargo was distributed throughout the entire crew. Pirates distributed their loot evenly, increasing the overall payment each crewmember received. Depending on the crew, the captain and other officers received only a half-share extra than that of a single crewmember. Conversely, privateering vessels granted the captain a share 1400 times greater than a single crewmember.<sup>3</sup> The equal distribution of wealth among pirates boosted camaraderie within the crew, allowing the captain to gain the trust of those under his command. Therefore, due to the strength and bond of the crews, pirates became a significant threat to the mercantile system of the Caribbean, undermining the colonial economy of the British Empire.

Ship captains were well aware of the necessity to gain the respect of their men, but it would be unrealistic to assume that they never got into any quarrels. Historian Peter Earle notes captains needed to be "tough men, used to maintaining order by force of their personalities and their fists," especially when managing a pirate crew.<sup>4</sup> It was also quite common for the captain and crewmembers to argue frequently with the "mate thinking himself the better man who was only deprived of command by his lack of enough capital to buy a share of the ship."<sup>5</sup> Despite members of a pirate crew sharing wealth and equal rights, there remained a notable disparity of power between the individual shipmate and the captain. Occasionally members of the crew sought to further their own interests, whether for financial or personal reasons, and on those occasions, the captain posed a threat to realizing those goals. Having command of a ship was considered the ideal position most pirates and sailors alike, but getting the majority of the ship's crew to side against the current captain in a vote was a near impossible task, as the captain would have taken care to have solidified his influence over the men.

One of the greatest enigmas for maritime historians is understanding the motivations of sailors who turned pirate. Aside from the aforementioned political and economic reasons, Earle adds that the pirate lifestyle was filled with plenty of food and drink, "for there was far less labor on a pirate ship with a crew of a hundred or more to sail a vessel which would only employ ten or twenty as a merchantman."<sup>6</sup> Since the practice of piracy required marauding the sea for vulnerable merchant vessels, crews were expected to stay out at sea for prolonged periods until prizes were identified and taken. Having free time was a luxury afforded to most pirates because they chose to sail under ideal weather, waiting for their next victim to draw near or give chase toward sails spotted in the distance. These times of idleness allowed the crew to enjoy themselves and celebrate their camaraderie by drinking and relishing in the freedoms granted by their piratical lifestyle.

Perhaps one of the greatest contributors to the field, Marcus Rediker has utilized a Marxist lens in examining the egalitarian social order of pirate crews, focusing on the individual experiences of these sea robbers. He has argued that the collective ownership crews possessed over their ships as well as the property onboard created spaces of freedom on the high seas. Robert C. Ritchie's seminal work, *Captain Kidd and the War against the Pirates*, claimed that English politicians were willing to use pirates to further their personal ambitions by using the story of privateer turned pirate William Kidd to blend the realm of politics with pirate history. More recently, Mark Hanna's *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire, 1570-1740* has taken a comprehensive approach in suggesting that the entirety of Atlantic piracy from the Elizabethan period to the start of the War of Jenkin's Ear (1738-1748) led to the formation of a more centralized British Empire that extended judicial and bureaucratic control over the imperial periphery.

Overall, the tendency of the field has been to place pirates within the context of having an important role in the historical narrative of the early eighteenth century. Due to the romanticization of pirates through literature, film, and popular culture, these marauders of the sea have been reduced to mere treasure-hunting tropes. While numerous groundbreaking works have made their way into the field, and recent scholarship has offered varying perspectives on these maritime criminals, none have attempted to explore the relationship between the campaign against pirates and state building as a tool for furthering the political power of the Whigs, particularly those of the Walpole Ministry. The suppression of piracy in the early eighteenth century can be viewed as more than just the pursuit of justice for crimes committed at sea, but as an instrument in the development of the modern British state.<sup>7</sup>

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States can be defined in a multitude of ways; however, this paper will use Charles Tilly's definition of states as "coercion wielding organizations" which "exercise clear priority in some respects over all other organizations."<sup>8</sup> The coercive force of a state is what allows it to gain a monopoly on violence and thereby legitimize the use of force over a national population. For Britain in the early eighteenth century, pirates represented a threat to the Crown's authority as agents of maritime violence that undermined the state's claim to a monopoly on the use of physical force. The relationship between Britain and piracy can also be analyzed using a center-periphery model, a spatial distinction comprised of a highly advanced center and a less developed periphery. Such a model has usually been employed to examine how the center dominates and exploits the periphery.<sup>9</sup> Relations between the center and periphery can be defined by three characteristics: attributes that distinguish the two, the nature of exchanging goods, and the patterns of interaction between the center and periphery. Pirates inhabited the British periphery ideologically by directly opposing the state's authority. The government, however, utilized the suppression of piracy as a reflection of the state's coercive power in demonstrating its capability to eliminate resistance. This model can also be used in the reverse direction, since events taking place in the periphery could also affect the circumstances of the center. The establishment of the British metropole validated efforts to assert the state's dominance over its political and colonial dominions. Though the suppression of piracy took place on the imperial periphery, the reports made regarding this campaign in print media proved influential in intimidating the Tories, Catholics, and Stuart sympathizers found at the British center. The Whigs sought to use the issue of piracy as a way of cementing their power. The government in London used its anti-pirate discourse at the center to bolster its claim of having complete control over all hegemonic instruments of coercion. By showing the nation the government's ability to end piracy, politicians strongly suggested that physical and judicial force could also be used against those who threatened the established political order in the British Isles.

The rise of piracy in the Caribbean can be attributed to the relationship between the pirates themselves and the peripheral space they inhabited. The Bahamas were a vital location for pirates to conduct their trade of illicit goods plundered by merchant vessels. With hundreds of pirates occupying Nassau by the conclusion of the War of the Spanish Succession, it raises the question as to how these seafaring bandits seized control of the area. Britain was in the midst of an awkward political transition from Queen Anne of House Stuart, to George I, the Protestant elector of Hanover. With the looming national debt the Spanish War, the political apparatus of Britain was in shambles. However, pirates had occupied New Providence Island for a decade before the ascension of George I, ruling out the notion that a lack of monarchical authority prevented the state from keeping the pirates at bay. Instead, pirates were able to establish such a strong foothold in Nassau due to a power vacuum caused by the Spanish when they obliterated the island in a naval attack that reduced New Providence to a "failed colony," a concept derived from the theoretical approach of a failed state.

Although conceptions of successful and failed states are much more prevalent in the discussion of policymaking in modern history and international relations, such a model can be appropriated in the Early Modern period. Before discussing the connection between failed states and failed colonies, it is first important to note the intended use of the word "failed." We typically define failure as the inability to succeed or meet certain goals, but success can still be achieved even if goals are not met. States can be considered failures if they lack the means of governing their populations. Colonies can be considered failures if they can no longer serve to the benefit of the state. Scholars have defined failed states as "[having lost] control over the means of violence," unable to "create peace or stability for their populations or control their territory."<sup>10</sup> First, a state can be perceived as body of political power, which exercises some form of control over people and spaces encompassed by its sovereignty. Michel Foucault discusses such hegemonic authority of the state through the notion of governmentality, the way in

which the government asserts its authority over the body populace.<sup>11</sup> Paired with a discussion of a center-periphery model, governmentality can also reflect the state's imperial authority as well as the need to demonstrate such power. Second, colonial holdings function as appendages to the state body. While the perception of colonial history attributes colonies as the political and economic extensions of the imperial state, the two are attached in a unilateral direction. Only one actor in the colonial relationship stands to benefit, with the periphery depending on the support of the center for its survival. Lastly, the state body can continue to thrive without its colonial appendage, but the appendage cannot hope to survive without attachment to the body. Therefore, once a colony loses the conditional support of its colonial overseer, it is only a matter of time until the region is laid waste by the domestic power vacuum that would ensue, leaving room for criminals and warlords to assume the mantle of control. In the case of New Providence, pirates seized the opportunity for occupation after the Spanish sacked the island. This paved the way for a pirate nest that Britain could not effectively root out until decades into the eighteenth century.

The Bahamas first became an English colony in 1631 and served as a base for privateers who plundered Spanish merchant ships. Aggravated by the constant sea raids, Spain in 1684 sent an expeditionary force of 200 men and laid waste to the island's capital, Charles Town.<sup>12</sup> The island remained unoccupied for a decade as most of its inhabitants fled in the raid's aftermath. In 1695, Nicholas Trott was appointed governor of New Providence and renamed the capital city to Nassau. However, due to ineffectual leadership that succeeded Trott's governorship, the island fell to ruin once more, and was laid to waste once again by a dual French and Spanish attack in 1703. This allowed pirates to occupy the island because without royal authority most of the privateers inhabiting Nassau transitioned to piracy and Britain had no need to commission them under letters of marque after the War of the Spanish Succession.

Notions of a failed colony have already been discussed within the context of English colonial and pirate history, but more so in the realm of fiction and literature. In *A General History of the Pyrates*, chapters on pirates Captain Misson and Captain Tew explore their roles in founding the fabled pirate colony of Libertalia. Although the existence of such an island has remained disputed by historians, its representation in the *History of the Pyrates* certainly can help explain the theoretical groundwork for the failure of the Bahamian colony. Robinson Crusoe's establishment of his own colony in Daniel Defoe's literary work can also shed some light on the idea of failed colonies. In the case of Libertalia, the colony ultimately failed when it was overrun by the native islanders and destroyed from within. The colony's defenses were constructed with a design facing outwards as a deterrent against Spanish or English incursions, ultimately underestimating an uprising by the natives.<sup>13</sup> While Crusoe's colony showed great promise throughout the novel, it ultimately fails for no apparent reason, leaving the island to be managed by its native inhabitants.<sup>14</sup> What is particularly striking about the tales of both colonies is how they arrived at the same state of failure. Libertalia and Crusoe's colony are similar in that their downfall occurred because of events that took place on the interior. Internal forces acting within each colony resulted in their inevitable collapse, which in turn led to their total destruction. In contrast, however, the failure of New Providence was caused by external forces, which left a shell of a colony just waiting to be reinhabited by wayward settlers. Since the Spanish mounted an invasion from outside the island, its physical destruction was far more pronounced, with entire buildings and fortifications having been ravaged; thus, rendering it a failure due to its seemingly inhospitable condition.

From within the context of eighteenth century imperial government, the state and its colonies comprise two distinctly separate entities which should not be viewed as one and the same. A state possesses

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sovereignty over its entire national polity, which a colony by design is not intended to exercise. Rather, colonies exist to serve the state by exporting raw materials to the benefit of the metropole. Yet, concepts of a failed state and failed colony share a significant similarity in that they both form power vacuums in their wake, providing an opportunity for outside forces to inhabit them. In this particular case, pirates were able to establish their own rudimentary commonwealth in Nassau due to the lack of legitimate British authority over the territory. In the first decade or so of the eighteenth century, the men who served as governor in Nassau, despite being installed by the British government, consorted with the pirates in order to profit off the illegitimate trade and plunder. Though New Providence was an official British colony under the government of the Crown, it was undeniably under the control of pirates.

Additionally, failed states form because they experience political or ideological ruin, whereas failed colonies are a product of their physical destruction. Much like the colonies mentioned in *A General History of the Pyrates* and *Robinson Crusoe*, the Bahamas experienced damages that rendered it incapable of hosting a civil community. Without imperial subjects to inhabit the colony, resources could not be extracted and sent back to the paternal state. Part of the reason why Britain became so adamant about suppressing the pirates in the eighteenth century was because piracy threatened not only commerce, but also British imperial authority in the Caribbean. Therefore, the Bahamas, as a failed colony, was problematic for Britain due to its status as a known haven for pirates in the aftermath of the Spanish War of Succession, a period largely ascribed as the apex of pirate activity in the West Indies.

By examining the Bahamas as a failed colony through the similar notion of a failed state, we can begin to reconceptualize how pirates, perhaps the most egregious criminals of the eighteenth century, were able to establish themselves and flourish in the ruins of a destroyed colony. By the time pirates started to inhabit New Providence at the turn of the century, war with Spain preoccupied Britain's maritime resources, leaving the government in no position to excise them from the Bahamas through force. Pirates enjoyed a strong decade of plundering the waters of the West Indies indiscriminately, relishing in a cycle of risk and pleasure. Therefore, the British needed to approach the suppression of piracy differently from a naval excursion. British citizens needed to be convinced that the existence of pirates in the colonies was a threat to the shared interest of the people and the Crown. By manipulating the public sphere throughout Britain and its colonies, pirates would be hunted, tried, and executed. Their removal from the Caribbean not only made the sea safer for merchants and travelers, but also reaffirmed the state's authority over its colonial enterprise.

Before investigating the way in which the British government went about portraying piracy to the public sphere, it is important, as previously mentioned, to frame the historical conditions shaped these men into a product of their time. Despite being criminals, they pursued a way of life that allowed them to escape abusive conditions. The period after the War of the Spanish Succession was mired with instability throughout the Atlantic. Though Britain successfully demonstrated naval dominance during the war, it was in no shape to retaliate against piracy during the post war period. The Royal Navy enlisted over 100,000 men to fight in the war, most of whom were sailors, already experienced with fighting at sea. Once the war concluded with the signing of the treaty of Utrecht in 1713, maritime crime exploded due to the power vacuum formed in the Atlantic where a surplus of sailors were left unemployed. Maintaining a standing army after the war proved far too costly for Britain to maintain, leading instead to a massive demobilization that released mariners, who only knew violence, into a surplus labor market.<sup>15</sup> Such was the risk of poverty, many turned to piracy simply to earn a living. Resourcefully, these sailors put their knowledge and skills to what they knew best, the sea. Even if it meant becoming a

criminal in the eyes of the British state, turning pirate offered them an ideal way of life that provided for their basic needs and a chance at economic stability.

The majority of pirates in the eighteenth century were already hardened sailors shaped by years of experience at sea. Prior to turning pirate, sailors often worked aboard merchant, naval, and privateering vessels. The organization of these ships centralized power to the captain who practiced harsh discipline on crewmembers to maintain control. Management of these types of ships varied slightly, but the harsh conditions sailors endured were nevertheless similar. While serving on merchant ships, mariners experienced brutality, as they were "cruelly beat and abus'd by their Officer." They were also malnourished, being "deprived of a considerable part of their provisions, or oblig'd to eat such stinking meat," which inhibited their bodies' digestion. Living quarters were cramped as many men "complained much of the severe confinement they endur'd many Months after they were press'd."<sup>16</sup> Due to living under such unpleasant conditions, sailors left their crews at the first chance they got, generally once they returned to land from long voyages. Many attempted to find legitimate work once again on different vessels, but most were beckoned by the call to piracy. The opportunity to make a quick fortune, which was to be split equally among the crew, made piracy quite appealing. Pirates were also granted the chance to enact vengeance by indiscriminately attacking merchant ships led by the captains who had previously abused them. Regardless of the reasons for sailors to turn pirate, they all shared the same experience as men of fortune.

Pirate crews were loosely organized in a democratic fashion as each man voted on important decisions that would impact the crew, especially the laws crewmembers were expected to obey, known as a ship's articles. This type of social organization was revolutionary in a time when centralized power was the popular method of leadership and governance, yet freedoms of piracy granted sailors a collective sovereignty in managing their own ships. Rediker views pirates as laborers who collectively worked the ship as their own property, sharing the risks of their adventures at sea.<sup>17</sup> Prior to the eighteenth century, practically any mariner could join a pirate crew, but after the War of the Spanish Succession, men with ties to land, particularly those who were married and had families, were denied admittance to some pirate ships.<sup>18</sup> As seafaring men who constantly placed their lives in danger, crews were composed of sailors who were fully invested in the pirate lifestyle. As opposed to lowly sailors on merchant vessels who had no claim to the cargo or the ship, the collective ownership of a pirate ship made the crew an egalitarian body of self-governance. Crewmembers had power over the decision making process, which involved planning the length and duration of voyages and where to commit robberies at sea.

Acquiring a ship was perhaps the most important aspect of organizing a pirate crew. In the eighteenth century, ships were very expensive investments and a lowly sailor had no way of gaining the necessary capital to purchase one himself. Instead of purchasing a ship, there were two ways for a newly-formed pirate crew to acquire a vessel. First, though an uncommon method, pirates could steal an unsuspecting ship already outfitted and docked at a harbor. Procuring the necessary supplies and ensuring that the ship functioned properly was both time consuming and costly. So those who lacked the funds and were eager to set sail, stole ships without having to worry about maintenance. However, an exception exists with the case of Captain Jack Rackham who stole a docked Spanish vessel solely to avoid capture by a Spanish Man of War.<sup>19</sup> Second, pirates could also gain control of a ship by inciting mutiny aboard a merchant vessel. Since sailors on merchant ships tended to despise working conditions, pirates could easily take over the vessel with little resistance and even add to their own crew numbers by recruiting the men aboard.<sup>20</sup>

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Even with a ship obtained, pirates needed to be cautious with the upkeep of the vessel to ensure that everything stayed afloat. Simple repairs often required purchasing fresh supplies of rope and cloth for the sails. The most significant form of maintenance that needed to be done periodically was careening, the cleaning of the underside of the ship. Sailing for prolonged periods caused the ship to grow a forest of barnacles below its hull. Over time, the accumulation of such an infestation would slow the vessel and make sailing even more difficult. Careening required the crew to beach the ship and tilt it on its side by tying and pulling rope on the mainmast. With the barnacles removed, the crew then repeated the process by tilting the ship over on its other side.<sup>21</sup> Careening could take up to a day to complete, depending on the size and strength of the crew, leaving the pirates vulnerable to attack, as they had no means of making a quick escape. For example, Captain George Lowther and his crew were captured by one Walter Moore while careening their sloop. While on a voyage to the Spanish owned island, Comena, Moore noticed another sloop on a deserted island where traders normally didn't venture. He supposed the vessel to be pirate and "took that Advantage to attack the said Sloop." Moore's crew attempted to board the ship, but the pirates "cut their Cables and bawled their Stern to Shore." Lowther and 10 of his men escaped out the cabin window once Moore captured the sloop, and for five days they hunted the pirates on the island. After capturing half of Lowther's men, Moore set out with the pirate sloop secured to his own and continued his voyage to Comena, leaving the remaining pirates marooned on the to die of hunger and disease.<sup>22</sup>

Prior to setting sail, crewmembers were required to agree upon the provisions of the ship's governing articles to which the men were bound by while out at sea. New articles were drafted if a new crew occupied a ship or if amendments needed to be made to the older ones. For pirates, nothing held more weight than the honor of a man's word. Newcomers swore oaths of loyalty to the articles and crew and were subject to punishment if they broke their word. Most articles were similar in outlining the basic conducts of the ship, with each man having the right to vote on matters concerning the crew, each being given equal access to food and drink and details as to how the shares of stolen prizes were distributed to each man. The articles for the crew of Captain Bartholomew Roberts were unique in that they forbade crewmembers from gambling; a popular leisure activity among sailors that alleviated stress and passed the time while out at sea. In addition, Roberts' articles sought to prevent infighting on the ship: "No one another on board, but every Man's Quarrels to be ended on Shore, at Sword and Pistol."<sup>23</sup> Though pirates enjoyed numerous freedoms, order needed to be maintained to ensure successful prize taking. In the case of Captain Roberts, preventing the men from giving into violence and temptation was what kept the crew stable.

Government and colonial officials were perhaps the most proactive individuals when it came to exercising an effective suppression of pirates. Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, Alexander Spotswood issued a proclamation offering "Rewards given for Apprehending or Killing of Pirates."<sup>24</sup> Even though the British government was concerned about the dangers of piracy toward their mercantile interests, American colonies were the ones to suffer the most due to their proximity to piratical plunder. Virginia especially was a lucrative colony with merchant ships full of rich prizes. Because the British navy lacked the manpower and capital to send ships to patrol American waters, Spotswood decided to declare a bounty on pirates near the Virginia and North Carolina colonies. He was most concerned with Blackbeard, who continued to commit acts of piracy despite his inclinations towards retirement. Spotswood offered to pay up to 100 pounds for Blackbeard specifically, 40 pounds for any other pirate captain, 20 pounds for higher officers such as lieutenants and quartermasters, 15 pounds for inferior officers, and 10 pounds for any "private man."<sup>25</sup> Incidentally, Blackbeard would fall to the forces of Robert Maynard a mere three days before Spotswood's proclamation was issued.



Though his large bounty was now off the table, the decree nevertheless encouraged greater participation by bounty hunters in the campaign against pirates.

The establishment of vice-admiralty courts throughout British colonies became an essential method of demonstrating the government's ability to crush any threat, no matter its distance from the center. Although vice-admiralty courts were held under the same principles as Common Law courts, they operated without juries, making them unpopular but effective tools for suppressing pirates.<sup>26</sup> Without a jury to hinder them, judges could impose guilty verdicts for maritime crimes that resulted in immediate execution. All the vice-admiralty courts needed were two eye witnesses to gain a conviction. Court proceedings were typically published to show the public the success of the government's endeavors against pirates. The *Trial of all Pyrates, Lately Taken by Captain Ogle* is perhaps the most extensive record of piracy trials held under the jurisdiction of vice-admiralty courts.<sup>27</sup> What is striking about these records is the number of sailors who were acquitted for their involvement in piracy. In the case of James White, "the Prisoner appeared to be decrepid [sic.] and ill-shapen, unfit for any purpose but Musick," which was supported by a witness who testified that "he was compell'd to sign the Articles of the Pyrates."<sup>28</sup> Even though Britain took an aggressive stance against piracy, Admiralty court trials were not completely unfair. Publicizing trials that ended in both acquittals and guilty verdicts showed the public what could happen to those committing crimes against the state, but also that the state was willing to forgive and capable of understanding that not all men were guilty of the charges brought against them. Presiding judges considered the physical condition and capabilities of sailors accused of piracy, delivering brutal justice only with condemning evidence. In the case of Mr. White, his role on the crew was limited to his ability to play music, given his health, making his acquittal justified. In the piracy trial of Thomas Athelone, however, the prisoner attempted to prove his innocence by suggesting "any Irregularities he might commit, was thro Drink" and while anchored off the coast of Nigeria, "at which Place he would have made his Escape, but it was among Canibals."<sup>29</sup> One of Athelone's victims testified that he was "Armed on board altogether, threatening no Quarters, and after firing and seizing his Ship" played a very active role in the robbery.<sup>30</sup> The court sentenced Athelone to death, which was delayed for a year when he sought the King's mercy. This was a rare occurrence as the Admiralty tended to act mercilessly towards any man proven guilty of piracy. As more stories of vice-admiralty court proceedings circulated throughout Britain and its colonies, waves of seamen flocked to Admiralty Offices throughout the 1720s, seeking to take advantage of the proffered pardon. Pirates began to fear the judicial might of the courts, and were hopeful that turning themselves in would grant them clemency for their crimes.

The British government's plan to use pardons as a tool for suppressing piracy was an offer that could only be extended to English pirates. Since the majority of pirates in the Atlantic were British subjects, and because of mounting pressure from the East India Trade Company, the government's top priority was to reaffirm control over British waters, as this was believed to be the best method. Coincidentally, Spain had also started to grant pardons to pirates who had obstructed their own trade system. This opened up an interesting loophole that made it possible for pirates to avoid capture by the British Admiralty and an execution sentence. A pirate vessel that had plundered an East Indian trading ship had "received a pardon from the Spaniards" while escaping pursuit from the *Folkland*, a vessel from the British naval fleet.<sup>31</sup> Because of the international laws of jurisdiction, pirates sailing in foreign waters could easily seek a pardon if they never raided a foreign trading ship. Due to the ease of avoiding incrimination, one British naval officer wrote to a French governor about three pirates that had sought refuge on the island and demanded that the governor deliver the men to him.

I do, in the Name of his Britannick Majesty, demand, and insist, that you do forthwith cause the said, Kendal, Foot, and Jemmy to be seized, and delivered to me, to be

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Prosecuted agreeable to the Laws of Our Land, it being contrary to Reason, honour and Justice that such Miscreants should find Protection, in any Cristian County, much more that they being Subjects to the King my Master, should be included in his Most Christian Majesty's Act of Grace, to whom they never Swore Allegiance, nor ever Demanded Protection, till after their having committed their Villanies, besides it is very well known, and I do confidently affirm, that it's Contrary to the Law of Nations for any Prince to Grant a Pardon to the Subjects of another; Nor can his Christian Majesty's Act of Grace Include any but to his Natural Borne Subjects, or such as are actually under his Protection at the time of his Granting such Act of Grace; It's absurd to think otherwise.<sup>32</sup>

By seeking refuge in French territory, the pirates were attempting to take advantage of international jurisdiction, as the British navy could not enter a colony of another state without proper permission. What the naval officer was trying to suggest in his letter was that criminal jurisdiction should fall under the authority of the nation that the accused originated. In this case, British subjects known for piracy should be captured and returned to the British authorities, even if they were within a foreign territory.

While the suppression of piracy began in 1717, its first major success occurred when Parliament installed Woodes Rogers, a privateer during the War of the Spanish Succession, as governor of the Bahamas the following year. Pirates had been using Nassau as a base to replenish supplies and sell their plunder through an illicit black market network. Rogers pursued a belligerent campaign against pirates, removing them from the Caribbean by offering pardons and threatening the noose. However, war with Spain in 1719 had Rogers more concerned with strengthening the island's fortifications.<sup>33</sup> It was not until 1721, after Robert Walpole was appointed First Lord of the Treasury that the anti-piracy campaign resumed. That same year, George I issued another proclamation, which once again extended a "Most Gracious Pardon," even for those who "do continue their Evil Course of Life." The provisions of this renewed offer were the same as its 1717 predecessor, with the one major difference being that those who surrendered under the pardon were forgiven "not only for such Robberies, but for such Murders also as they may, as Pirates, have committed on our Subjects."<sup>34</sup> The campaign against pirates needed to begin anew, but this time there would be an associated campaign in the public sphere at the British center.

Before piracy became a serious issue for the British periphery, the English government on several occasions had enlisted the services of pirates, granting them royal sponsorship, to plunder and disrupt the maritime trade networks of its adversaries: France and Spain. During the War of the Spanish Succession, many of these seafaring men were given privateering licenses by the crown to aid the war effort. As mentioned, the immediate aftermath of the war saw a surplus of unemployed sailors in the labor market who put their trade towards piracy. By 1713, the pirates established a base in the Bahamas under the leadership of Benjamin Hornigold, and using Nassau as their headquarters, conducted business in one of the most lucrative black market networks with the goods that they plundered from merchant ships.

After peace with Spain was assured by the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, the South Sea Company, a joint-stock venture that intended to monopolize trade in South America, was finally able to reach its potential as a profitable trading organization. Because the War of the Spanish Succession inhibited English trade relations with Spain's South American colonies, the South Sea Company, at its inception in 1711, was less concerned with practicing commerce and more focused on its intended purpose of financing the national debt.<sup>35</sup> Due to the company's popularity, and fabricated claims of wealth, its stock rose to astronomical proportions, eventually creating the devastating phenomenon known to scholars as the South Sea Bubble. In January 1720, the company's stock traded at £128, but by

June, share prices had escalated to an unprecedented £1050. The South Sea Bubble would ultimately burst when investor confidence in the company wavered and stockholders sold their shares at an alarming rate. By September, collapse of the Bubble caused the stock to plunge to £175 per share, leaving entire institutions ravaged in its wake.<sup>36</sup>

The South Sea Bubble as an event was an economic calamity caused by, to a degree, a lack of foresight by the king's first minister, the Earl of Stanhope. In 1718, Britain was once again at war with Spain in a conflict known as the War of the Quadruple Alliance. Stanhope, in favor of an expensive foreign policy, sought to maintain a large army by levying high taxes to pay for the war, thereby increasing the monetary strain on the public. In 1721, just months after the South Sea Bubble burst, Stanhope was dead, and was succeeded by none other than the man brought in for his adept political and economic maneuvering, Sir Robert Walpole.

Walpole was appointed specifically by the king to repair the damage done by the collapse of the South Sea Bubble, which he accomplished primarily by lowering the increased taxes put in place by Stanhope. Since piracy undermined British commerce and exacerbated the economic decline, the government, under Walpole's leadership, took an aggressive stance within both the periphery and the public sphere to curb all forms of dissent and opposition to better serve his agenda. As the First Lord of the Treasury who also commanded the political monopoly of the Whig party, Walpole was a statesman who recognized the potential in manipulating the state's political apparatus through newspapers. At the beginning of Walpole's term in office, Britain's prosecution of piracy was reaching its peak throughout the Caribbean and American colonies. This was vital because maintaining Britain's finances required commerce to be in a healthy state, as "much of the Government's revenue was raised from customs and excise duties."<sup>37</sup> With pirates still plundering merchant vessels throughout the West Indies and American colonies, efforts to recover from the South Sea Bubble were delayed, if not at a total standstill. However, launching a full military campaign against the pirates would only further the national debt, and so there was only a minimal naval presence in the Atlantic. Britain simply lacked the financial infrastructure to vigorously pursue piracy; therefore, Walpole instead employed slightly pacifistic means in his foreign policy to bide time on the piracy issue while actively seeking to lower the national debt.

Though proficient in managing finances, Walpole's ability to execute an effective foreign policy was far from exceptional. His lack of language skills and experience with diplomacy certainly diminished his reputation among critics, which led to a series of heavy-handed propaganda campaigns that silenced his opposition while justifying the ministry's policies.<sup>38</sup> Newspaper articles detailing the exploits of pirates were more than simple reports on criminal activity in the West Indies, but also a way of promoting Walpole's foreign policy (specifically in Whig-sponsored newspapers). While there has been evidence to suggest that Walpole was a proponent of using physical force to suppress his critics, the use of pro-government propaganda was a more efficient method of swaying the public sphere in his favor.<sup>39</sup> Clearly, the use of force can prove effective when trying to put down dissent on an individual level, but Walpole was not foolish to assume that such methods would work on a societal level. By spending only £50,000 to sponsor political newspapers that disseminated pro-government propaganda, the majority of readers would eventually side with the Whigs, minimizing, and perhaps even reducing, political resistance throughout Britain.

Political affiliations aside, British newspapers and periodicals depicted pirates as savages inhabiting British waters. They all sought to demonize the pirates, which further advertised the government's campaign against them. As a former captive of pirates, Richard Hawkins provided a firsthand account of

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a sadistic tradition practiced by the entire crew should a man choose to leave piracy and return home. For this parting ritual, the exiting crewmember was “sentenced to receive Ten Lashes with a Mannarie Strap from every Man and Boy in the Ship, which was rigorously executed” to deter others from abandoning the crew.<sup>40</sup> Witnessing such a gruesome scene distressed Hawkins (as well as readers), but the account served to reinforce the threat of pirates. Yet, in spite of being harbingers of violence and death on the high seas, pirates were still offered royal pardons, and newspapers were more than willing to report instances of entire crews, and even infamous pirate captains, taking advantage of this mercy. This royal act of forgiveness for such heinous crimes demonstrated Britain’s continued inability to effectively remove pirates through force alone. Walpole was reluctant to go to war with another nation because of the national debt looming over him. Therefore, it would be inconceivable for him to employ the full force of the navy in what would have been a costly military campaign against the pirates. Walpole recognized the political and economic ramifications of war, and endeavored to keep Britain out of any conflicts, including one physically combatting piracy, until the national debt was resolved.

Even before Walpole came to power, the early Hanoverian state began as a weakened regime as its formation was met with strong resistance. Tension with Spain persisted after the war and the conservative beliefs of the Tories, which favored maintaining the lineage of the James Stuart, placed them in direct opposition with their new king, George I. The situation came to a head when a leader of the Tory party, Bolingbroke, fled to France to support the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715. With the Jacobites slowly gaining support throughout Britain, pirates also became sympathetic to the movement. Pirates used Jacobitism as a recruiting tool to expand crews, and acted in support of the cause by naming ships in honor of the Stuarts, toasting to the health of James the Old Pretender, and even offering military support. There remains no indication that the British government correlated the Jacobite rising, the Fifteen, to piracy in its political newspapers, but such a connection would be inconsequential, as eliminating one threat would take care of the other.

Despite the failure of the Fifteen, the Jacobites remained adamant that they could prevail in restoring the Stuart monarchy. An anti-Hanoverian poem distributed two years later denounced the rule of George I, “Which sadly foretels the Downfall of the Nation: With Plagues and Disasters this reign does begin, and England his Curs’d, till Great James brought in.”<sup>41</sup> The distribution of anti-government literature was not uncommon in the early eighteenth century and usually did not go unpunished; however, another major Jacobite rising would not occur until decades later in 1745 by which time piracy would have been effectively suppressed. The delay between the Fifteen and the Forty-Five Jacobite risings could suggest that the Hanoverian government succeeded in eliminating those in opposition to its authority. However, assuming that the suppression of piracy directly influenced the Jacobite hiatus would be unrealistic, but using the campaign against pirates as a lesson for potential threats can hold merit in examining the government’s attempt to reclaim its monopoly over violence.

Scholars have noted the emergence of a print culture in Britain at the start of the eighteenth century. Though quite meager at first, printed works and readership increased immensely during this period. Newspaper circulation in the first decade of the century was approximately 50,000 each week, but by the middle of the century, that number rose to nearly 200,000 papers in circulation. Due to the extensive availability and frequent sharing of newspapers in social settings such as taverns, inns, and clubs, the circulation figure should be multiplied five or ten times over. The expansion of print culture was made possible by a lapse of the Licensing Act in 1695, which previously limited publications by requiring government approval for all published works. The expired act inadvertently granted freedoms to the press by allowing numerous publishers to begin newspapers that were not constrained by the

government. The first daily newspaper would be *The Daily Courant* established in 1702, which set the precedent for British print culture by providing the public with a consistent news source.<sup>42</sup>

The market of printed news flourished in the early eighteenth century. Talented writers such as Addison, Defoe, Fielding, Goldsmith, Johnson, Steele, and Swift made current events interesting to read. Along with the high demand for political news and commentary, newspapers wrote about the government with hostility, which offered readers new insight about prominent political figures.<sup>43</sup> Of the many newspapers to be published at the start of the eighteenth century, the *Examiner*, *Spectator*, and *Tatler* were among the most renowned at their inception, for they employed some of the greatest writers of their time. British historian Frank O’Gorman noted that the development of printed media “reflected the expansion of the political nation and, to some extent, helped to enlarge it further.”<sup>44</sup> Printed newspapers and periodicals created a culture of widespread political consciousness throughout the populace. Even though the upper class continued to dominate the majority of political discussions, print media created a space for public opinion to weigh in on different matters of public concern and offer criticism when necessary. For the first time in British history, the government could not censor the press through parliamentary acts or royal decrees. Instead, politicians were required out of political practicality to address the changing climate of print media through coercion or adaptation in accordance with the new media landscape that had formed.

Certain publishers viewed this as an opportunity to undermine members of the government as well as entire political parties. The sole purpose of *The Craftsman*, for example, was to spread hostility toward the Whig ministry under Robert Walpole. Because newspapers were so widely read throughout the eighteenth century, the government could do little to directly combat printed criticism. In the face of public scrutiny, they responded to such attacks by accusing and trying journalists for committing crimes of seditious libel, treason, and writing scandal. Punishments sometimes resulted in hefty fines that bankrupted newspapers, but more severe sentences often entailed imprisonment or even exile. Other attempts to control the press involved intimidation by hiring thugs who used force to threaten and assault publishers. The government also issued an increased tax on paper through the Stamp Act of 1712, which made it impossible for lesser-known yet more troublesome newspapers to thrive financially.<sup>45</sup> The newspapers that did survive such measures were those whose owners had political connections or consistently wrote in favor of the government. By lessening the amount of criticism circulated by the newspapers throughout the public sphere, the government regained the support of the people while promoting policies that would extend state building, which included the permanent suppression of piracy.

The remaining newspapers covered fundamental information such as government notices and proclamations as well as foreign and church news. To increase and attract readership, publishers started to include stories of natural disasters, extraordinary feats and accomplishments, and most notably the exploits of criminals.<sup>46</sup> Pirates were among the most popular subjects written about by the British press because they represented not only a threat to the entire mercantile economy, but were also viewed with great fascination, especially after the release of Captain Charles Johnson’s *History of the Pyrates* in 1724. But even before the book was published pirates maintained a strong presence throughout British and colonial newspapers. A detailed article from *The Boston News-Letter* offered an account of naval officer Captain Solgard’s pursuit of Captain Edward Low, who was perhaps the most violent and deadly pirate during the Golden Age. Low commanded a sloop of 10 guns and 70 men during the engagement and barely escaped after his ship sustained heavy damaged from Solgard’s man-of-war. From the time the account was taken, the publisher noted that Low had recently outfitted his crew and took a sloop

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belonging to a “Nathan Skiff Master, who they barbarously kill’d, and kept 2 Indians; the rest of the Men they sent ashore in their Whale Boats without any other sustenance than Water.”<sup>47</sup> Such atrocities at sea astounded readers due to the dangers faced and unadulterated acts of violence committed by pirates. They represented an unfathomable social organization devoted to the evocation of violence and fear among Britain’s populace and its colonial subjects. Therefore, coverage in newspapers was perceived as necessary to inform readers of instances of robbery and murder committed at sea while also granting relief in knowing the defeat of any notable pirate captains and crews meant one less threat to the security of the Empire.

The barbarous actions of pirates were perhaps best exemplified when newspapers wrote on the subject of ships succumbing to mutiny. Because vessels were too expensive to outfit and maintain, pirates often relied on taking them from unsuspecting owners right from the harbor. If a pirate crew ever became too large for a single ship, a trusted officer would be given the task of finding and taking command of a new vessel that would be added to the small pirate fleet. However, it was quite rare for a pirate crew to experience mutiny themselves, with the key players more often than not being men who were unwillingly forced into piracy. One pirate by the name of Captain Shipton attempted to steal an English vessel, the *John and Mary*, docked at the bay of Honduras with a modest crew of approximately 10 men. The pirates captured the captain and placed him on a sloop, which they had also taken, bound for the island of Roatán. Nicholas Simmons and Jonathan Barlow, two men forced to labor under Shipton, decided to seize an opportune moment in acquiring the *John and Mary* to escape from the pirate crew. Simmons was put in command of the vessel and ordered to follow Shipton back to Roatán. But once the captain and his men left, “Simmons & Barlow unty’d Perry the Mate, set him at liberty,” realizing that if they and the remaining crew members of the *John and Mary* allied themselves, they would secure “their own liberty and the Ships Company from the hands of such Cruel Pirates.”<sup>48</sup>

Upon arming Perry and his men with a few pistols, Simmons retreated back to the cabin while the sailors fought the remaining pirates in order to take back the ship. Hearing several gunshots, Simmons went out to assess the commotion in which he “shot the strongest of the tree Pirates thro’ the body; and told the other, If he made any resistance, he should be a dead Man. Upon this, Barlow, or some of the Ships Company kill’d the other.”<sup>49</sup> Newspaper articles of this nature addressed the possibility of pirates losing vessels, men, and loot to their own mutinous tactics. Piracy was a practice that generally employed willing participants, but there were still men who were either forced into the trade or endeavored to escape once they experienced the cruel conditions. During the 1720s, pirates preferred men who committed themselves to the crew, as they were more likely to maintain morale and unit cohesion. The only men forced into piracy were those with valuable skillsets.<sup>50</sup> Simmons, in the above article, was taken by a crew because he was a competent navigator. Regardless, publishing Simmons and Barlow’s successful desertion of the pirate crew depicted a desire to return to larger British society. Other forced men could use that story to incite their own future mutinies, thereby further undermining general pirate operations and indirectly promoting the British state’s authority over the Atlantic.

Prior to 1720, British newspapers offered little coverage on the exploits and nefarious deeds of pirates. Most newspapers that attempted to write about piracy were limited to announcing pirates being captured or advertising upcoming trials and executions. This may have been because pirate activity remained an isolated issue within the Caribbean and there were simply no firsthand accounts published. It was not until after Governor Rogers’ endeavor to excise the pirates from the Bahamas that the British press was able to provide much more detailed accounts. Without a place to call home, pirates could no longer hide behind their commonwealth, leading to exposure by the burgeoning press of the public sphere. With more information on pirates now at their disposal, the Whigs were able to use such

extensive coverage to extirpate Atlantic piracy in their pursuit to end other forms of anti-government dissent.

Aside from publishing enthralling pirate stories, government-sponsored newspapers had the ulterior, but unsubtle, motive of depicting pirates as fiends that plagued the oceans with violence and terror. While on its way back to London, one ship experienced the misfortune of a pirate raid that began with all passengers and sailors being stripped of their money and clothes.

The next thing they did was, with madness and rage to tare up the Hatches, enter the Hould like a parcel of Furies, where with Axes, Cutlasses, &c, they cut, tore and broke open Trunks, Boxes, Cases and Bales, and when any of the Goods came upon Deck which they did not like to carry with them aboard their ship, instead of tossing them into a Hould again they threw them over board into the Sea...<sup>51</sup>

The brutal treatment of victims and their goods would serve to further perpetuate already widespread representations of pirates during the early eighteenth century. They were portrayed in newspapers with condemning diction, affecting a type of "otherization" process which the government so desired. Pirates needed to be illustrated as intolerable criminals that the government was willing and ready to effectively suppress through physical force. Not only were they depicted as inherently violent, but also as base and vulgar. During the entire raid, a victim recalled "[t]here was nothing heard among the Pirates all the while, but Cursing, Swearing, Dam'ing, and Blaspheming to the greatest degree imaginable..."<sup>52</sup> Some pirates even professed outright their indignation with the Crown, as they "often ridicul'd and made a mock of King George's *Acts of Grace with an Oath*," complaining that they had not received enough money for taking the king's pardon, which justified their return to piracy. By following the reprehensive actions of pirates with the relatable accounts of their victims, readers became exposed to the threat of pirates without ever embarking on a voyage at sea themselves. Pro-government newspapers relied on the manipulation of public perception to compel British subjects to support the government's campaign against pirates.

Papers also attempted to degrade pirates by writing about their bold characteristics. One fisherman offered an account of a pirate who entered Saint Lawrence with a sloop of 12 guns and 160 men and "made himself Master of the said Harbour, and all the ships there, being 22 Sail, and 250 Shallops."<sup>53</sup> Even though the inhabitants on the colony vastly outnumbered the pirates, armed with 1200 men and 40 guns on the harbor alone, the pirates still managed to occupy the port, granting them leverage to seize control of the entire town. To further gloat in his victory, the unnamed pirate captain went so far as to take all the ship masters prisoner, "and beat some of them heartily for their Cowardice in not making any Resistance" during the takeover. Dominating the town's most seasoned and hardy sailors asserted the pirate crew's place as terrifying invaders who were not to be trifled.<sup>54</sup> Ironically, those who did attempt to fight back suffered the most severe punishment and were the first to be threatened and killed if not all of the pirates' demands were met. During the occupation, the captain would fire his gun in the morning to signal all of the ship masters to assemble for roll call and receive their orders for the day, "one was that no House, Chest, or Locker, &c, should be locked while he remains there, under Pain of severe punishment."<sup>55</sup> Although the pirates occupied the harbor for but a mere four days, the way in which they maintained control over the inhabitants likely engrossed while also striking fear into readers. Threatening and inflicting violence on whomever they pleased with or without reason certainly would have resulted in the sensible desire to see the pirates removed from all British colonies. Much like the way pirates used fear as a tactic to assert control, the government also played on the public's own fears of threats against the British state. Publishing stories such as this one would have compelled people to

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support the government, as only the political might of the state could protect them from the dangers of Britain's treacherous periphery.

Before *A General History of the Pyrates* was published, the only source of information on some of the most infamous pirates came solely from newspapers and periodicals. Actual biographical information was scarce and scattered throughout many different publications. Readers, eager to learn more about the lives of some of the era's most notorious maritime villains, undoubtedly would have paid particular attention to articles providing biographies on any pirate. Walter Kennedy's biography was published in the *Weekly Journal* and went on to be referenced several times in *A General History of the Pyrates*. Like most pirates of the 1720s, Kennedy served during the War of the Spanish Succession, "but being told what Lords the Pirates in America were, and that they had gotten several whole Islands under their own Command, he coveted to be one of those petty Princes."<sup>56</sup> Kennedy was commissioned to serve under Woodes Rogers to reclaim the Bahamas from the pirate inhabitants. Once governor of the island, Rogers placed Kennedy in command of two sloops on a trading venture. The ships were but a few leagues out at sea when the crew decided to turn pirate, "and all who refuted were to be kill'd."<sup>57</sup> But Kennedy was quickly disillusioned with the life of a pirate: "it was a most unhappy as well as wicked Life; that they were always in dread, and forced to fly from, or fight with every Ship they met. That they were twice obliged to fight in the Night Time, besides their frequent Skirmishes in the Day Time; but they were never taken, it being their Maxim, to overcome, or to escape, or to die."<sup>58</sup> The tenacity of pirates to uphold their way of life was something that was both commendable and naïve. The promise for wealth and adventure was appealing to so many sailors left unemployed after the Spanish War of Succession, but the crude realities of being labeled a criminal and constantly fighting for survival at sea led to sailors like Kennedy to soon regret their decision.

When he was finally captured and sentenced to death, Kennedy seemed to embrace his fate, but on the day of his execution he "appear'd extremely terrify'd and concern'd at the near approach of Death."<sup>59</sup> His final words were that of remorse, apologizing for all of the crimes he committed. Kennedy concluded his departure by addressing his audience: "I hope all here will be warn'd by my dismal Example, and not fancy Happiness can arise from Robbery and Cruelty; and I believe all my former Companions are, or will be as wretched as I am."<sup>60</sup> Kennedy's denouncement of his own as well as his contemporaries' piratical ways served to dissuade others from becoming or continuing their lives as pirates. While a fascinating look into the personal story of a pirate, Kennedy's life, as representative of his fellow pirate brethren, was written as a tragedy, to remind readers that willfully opposing the government was practically suicidal. Britain's government in the early eighteenth century may have struggled in consolidating its power, but it was only a matter of time until the government reasserted its dominance over all British subjects.

Newspapers were especially sure to capture the base and cowardly acts of pirates when facing British naval vessels in battle. When naval captain Gwatkins sailed into Carolina, his ship was "attack'd by a Pirate-Sloop, but that she received her so very warmly, that above thirty of the Pirates were kill'd upon the Spot and the rest at length oblig'd to run their Sloop on Shore."<sup>61</sup> Pirates knew better than to directly engage well armed naval vessels, and relied on ambushing their foes to gain an edge in battle. Unfortunately for the pirates in this incident, as recounted in the *British Journal*, Gwatkins successfully fended off the pirates and even retaliated by crippling their numbers. However, the captain was killed during the conflict, amidst a valiant effort to burn the pirate sloop during their desperate escape.

Another article from *The Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post* published a piece on a similar naval victory over a group of pirates. The article gave a detailed account of a lengthy pursuit that started due to the



vigilance of a Captain Peter Solgard, who identified the "Pirate Consorts that had done so much Mischief" off the coast of New York before dawn.<sup>62</sup> After several hours of alternating flight and confrontation, Solgard's ship, the *Greyhound*, finally cornered the two pirate sloops near mid-afternoon: "the Engagement began again by a brisk Fire on both Sides, till one of the Sloops Main-yards was shot down, and the *Greyhound* keeping close to her, she struck, and cry'd one for *Quarter*," while the other sloop managed to escape by sailing west. Once the damage sloop was taken, a defeated pirate "went out upon the Boltsprit with a Pistol and a Flask in his Hand, and having drank and uttered several dreadful Imprecations, he clapp'd the Pistol to his own Head, and shot out his Brains."<sup>63</sup> The pirate's suicide demonstrated a portrayal of cowardice that the article was attempting convey to readers. Pirates of the early eighteenth century were supposed to be fearless brutes that lived by their principles even if it meant death. Though this pirate ended his life prematurely, perhaps to avoid a tedious trial and the spectacle of a public execution, the mention of his suicide in the article was intended to depict him as a lowly degenerate who feared the consequences of answering for his crimes against the Crown. In most newspaper articles, pirates were depicted as having debilitating human characteristics such as cowardice, regret, and ignorance in order to destroy their reputation as the unbeatable devils of the sea. In doing so, the Whig government proved to the public that the authority of Great Britain could suppress any form of dissent.

Towards the middle of the 1720s, when the number of pirates approached an all-time low, the Admiralty sought to keep British sailors from regressing to piracy. They went about doing so through a series of propositions, which attempted to expand the rights of mariners sailing under British colors. Among the various provisions, the government wanted to ensure that sailors were paid appropriate wages for the work they did at sea. According to the proposals, "Seamen who enter voluntarily into the King's Service, shall begin wages from the day of their Entry," so long as they boarded their within two weeks of taking a job.<sup>64</sup> The main reason piracy became such a significant issue leading into the 1720s was because men who fought or served during the War of the Spanish Succession received their pay much later, sometimes years after the conflict, even after placing their lives in constant peril. By guaranteeing payment, and even incentivizing men to enter service sooner, the government attempted to reconcile its negligence for sailors during the war. Additionally, the list of propositions can be seen as a way to win back rogue mariners who took up and remained in piracy as a way of making a decent living. The worth of a sailor depended wholly on his strength, ability, and longevity. More often than not, veteran seamen were forced to move between different ships and work with entirely new crews because they were seen as expendable.

With the new proposals, "A Seaman who has served the King voluntarily for 20 years, and is not under Fifty five Years of Age, shall be for ever protected from being Press'd," and could be freely admitted to Greenwich Hospital, or any other, should he require medical attention.<sup>65</sup> Mariners were constantly prone to injury and even death while manning a ship at sea. The tasks they performed caused tremendous stress on the body and mind, lending to the widespread reputation of sailors being considered the hardest of men. Guaranteeing medical service for older sailors enticed them to stay in the King's service up until retirement, thus, weakening any temptation to turn pirate. Perhaps the government learned from the pirates themselves that providing sailors with better treatment and working conditions created an environment in which men were willing to continue their work out of compliance rather than fear or threat.

Although the government's proposals appeared to be a step in the right direction for sailors' rights, they were still the subject of criticism. An anti-Whig newspaper, *Mist's Weekly Journal* first attacked the

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legitimacy of the proposed articles by challenging whether “the Lords of the Admiralty and Commissioners of the Navy have a Power of doing every Thing... without an Act of Parliament.”<sup>66</sup> The logistics of carrying out the proposals seemed slightly unrealistic to critics such as the namesake for the journal, Nathaniel Mist, and for good reason. Sailors out at sea for extended periods were eligible for advances in their pay every two months, and given the vastness of the sea, there could be no way for the Admiralty to enforce the provision, especially if it wasn’t written into law. This could allow officers controlling the ship’s finances to withhold pay at their discretion, using already promised wages to forcibly control and abuse sailors. Mist identified this key issue as a way of criticizing both corrupt maritime officers and government leaders:

I think the Subject has Reason to be highly content, that Men, who receive noble Salaries for very little Service, should by law be oblig’d hereafter to do their Duty, and I hope no Man would grumble, if there should be a Law to oblige even the Lord Treasurer himself (when there is such an Officer) to apply *some* of the Publick Money to the Use and Service of the PUBLICK, and that the same was to extend to all Men in Employments from the *Peer* down to the Tidewaiter.<sup>67</sup>

The explicit remark against Britain’s First Lord of the Treasury, Robert Walpole, indicated the need to address the abuse of power found at sea and within Britain. Mist himself had years of experience at sea before going into newspaper publication. His sailing ethos paired with his disdain towards Walpole’s Ministry captured the frustration of Britons who toiled away in their line of work, only to be pushed around by those socially and economically above them. Clearly, the government wanted to appear as though it was starting to take care of its own citizens, when in actuality, the proposal to encourage sailors to join in the King’s service may have been nothing more than anti-pirate propaganda filled with empty promises serving the interests of the state alone. The lack of physical and legal enforcement for some of the proposed privileges made it so that sailors felt confident in going into a loyal service of the state, but it was left up to a ship’s officers to put the provisions into practice.

The Whigs were able to claim political dominance over Parliament at the start of the Hanoverian regime in the aftermath of the War of the Spanish Succession. During this time, they also seized control of the majority of political newspapers to silence critics and maintain their reputation. On September 1717, the *London Gazette* published a royal proclamation of George I who called for the effectual suppression of piracy, demanding that the pirates surrender themselves under a “gracious Pardon” and have their piratical deeds forgiven by the crown. The same article presented piracy as a threat, and unless the issue was addressed “the whole Trade from Great Britain to those Parts [colonies] will not only be obstructed, but in imminent Danger of being lost.”<sup>68</sup> As a government-owned publication dating back to the prior century, the *London Gazette* was a convenient medium for the Whigs to circulate their political ideology through print media. With the increasing prevalence of daily newspapers in the eighteenth century, the government could easily issue notices and report important news to the public in a manner that best served their interests. Proclamations such as this would increasingly become more accessible within the public sphere; thus, the Whig perception of how and why piracy should be suppressed dictated the public’s view as well, thereby endorsing a hatred for pirates that would prevent them from conducting business or establishing safe havens in the colonies.

For centuries, piracy had been a common subject to report in newspapers and periodicals, but at the start of the eighteenth century, particularly after the conclusion of the War of the Spanish Succession, there was a journalistic boom in articles which began to extensively cover the exploits, trials, and deaths of pirates. With the Whigs controlling much of the political coverage, many articles used condemning language that admonished pirates as barbarous savages who only know violence. In 1723, Samuel Kneeland published the court proceedings of a trial of 36 individuals tried for piracy. What is unique about this trial is that the ship articles of Captain Edward Low were included in the document, providing

insight on the organization and ethics of the crew. Low's articles stressed the inevitability of corporal punishment for those who disobeyed the rules. While in battle, those who demonstrated "Cowardice in the Time of Engagement, shall suffer what Punishment the Captain and the majority of the Company shall think fit."<sup>69</sup> The grotesque punishment of Low's crew demonstrated that order could only be enforced by violence. Although not explicit in what the sentence could be, the article suggested that the captain and crew could vote to lash, maroon, or execute the offender. Regardless, physical punishment served less as a way to teach the offender a lesson and more as a method of reinforcing the authority of the articles. While not all pirates managed their ships in the same manner as Low, publishing these articles certainly would have convinced the public that the pirates occupying the Atlantic posed a legitimate threat to the well-being of British citizens and colonial subjects.

The Whigs' tight grasp on power inevitably made them the subject of criticism in the public sphere. Dissident Whigs and Tories started the *Craftsman* with the explicit intention of undermining the Walpole Ministry. Criticism, however, could not be direct, and needed to be masked in some way. Publishers at the time were constantly accused and even charged with libel for writing against the government. To avoid such charges, writers like Nathaniel Mist utilized allegory and satire when discussing British politics. As a secret supporter of the Jacobite cause, Mist strongly opposed the Hanoverian monarchy as well as Walpole's allegedly corrupt faction of Whigs. In 1724, Mist wrote a review of *A General History of the Pyrates*, the first ever work to provide a comprehensive account of the lives of the most prominent pirates.<sup>70</sup> He started the piece with a digression on the virtues of reading, noting that it "saves me many a Shilling, and keeps off both Tavern and Apothecary Bills."<sup>71</sup> Instead of spending nights at a tavern, the writer instead claimed to spend his time at home in the company of Titus Livy and Cornelius Tacitus. Mist's reference to two Roman historians in this piece served to undermine the allegedly corrupt Whigs under Walpole, who would rather squander the country's money than learn from these writers about the best ways of managing a government. Mist implied that members of the Whig Ministry were both nefarious and ineffectual leaders who allowed their own interests to impede on the way they maintained the British state. Mist then made another subtle jab at the Whigs by comparing "great men," a reference to Walpole and his political allies, to "pirate chiefs" who brutalize their victims.<sup>72</sup> In doing so, Mist utilized satire as a way of contesting the government through pirate discourse.

Since the Whigs did not respond to the piece, Mist, in a later article, furthered the attack by composing a fictitious letter from a club owner who complained that the previous article had offended a Whig patron. The imaginary writer described his patron as "[an] ignorant and ill bred Fellow," but assured the reader that he was a Justice of Peace, who had a "Sagacity of smelling out Disaffection or Treason."<sup>73</sup> Upon listening to another club member read aloud Mist's review of the *History of Pyrates*, the Whig became irate, asking those around him "why can't you see... that all this shim-sham Story of Pyrates is an impudent libel upon great men?"<sup>74</sup> The Justice complained that it was clear "who [was] meant by *Roberts*, who by *Black-Beard*, and so on. —But as for the two female Pyrates, he said, it was so plain that you might as well have writ their Names and Titles at length."<sup>75</sup> The implication was that the real pirates were not in the Caribbean, but in London running the government. In 1729, the Whigs finally took action against Mist and his journal by punishing the members of his staff. Mist himself was able to flee to France where he published *Fog's Weekly Journal*.<sup>76</sup> The expansion of print media in the early eighteenth century provided a space in which the press could openly publish pieces that spoke out against the government. This deregulation in publishing caused by the 1695 lapse of the Licensing Act opened up the realm of British politics, granting room for the circulation of public opinion in newspapers and periodicals. The violent activities of pirates were among the many stories journalists reported. Still, it is important to note that most articles were taken from second hand accounts (such as letters and official

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documents), which proved to be a limitation in providing the most accurate retelling of the pirates' exploits and immoral deeds. Writers would also use the subject of piracy as a way to undermine the Whig government in power. Satirical devices such as allegory and indirect allusion were among the arsenal of Britain's most gifted writers who avoided charges of libel until the Walpole Ministry came into power in 1722. By that time, Whigs started to eliminate any opposition they faced in the press while simultaneously employing and sponsoring writers who were pro-government. Thus, with authority over political newspapers secured, the Whigs seized control over the shaping of public opinion, which allowed them to craft the perception of pirates as a threat to the British state and its loyal subjects.

To this day the arts have remained a primary method of conveying social commentary about relevant societal issues. Whether by literature or theatre, writers have used the entertainment appeal of their works to express deeper messages that either question or criticize those in power. The same can be said for the pirate plays and operas, which depicted piracy in a manner that attempted to undermine the government's authority in England. Although a romanticized image of pirates came to dominate popular culture with the release of Robert Lewis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, truer interpretations of their image can be seen in the eighteenth century, on the stage, while they were still at large in the Caribbean. However, because pirates were relatively unknown to their British contemporaries in the early years of the eighteenth century, there were few productions centered on pirates from the West Indies.<sup>77</sup>

Perhaps the most popular pirate play in the early eighteenth century, Charles Johnson's *The Successful Pyrate* was a romanticized retelling of Henry Avery's exploit over the Mughal emperor's flotilla as well as becoming king of a rumored pirate commonwealth in Madagascar.<sup>78</sup> As the man believed to have started the Golden Age of piracy, Avery's notoriety transformed into legend when the play debuted in 1713. In addition to furthering Avery's fame, the play did much to encourage the notion that pirates only made their fortune by committing acts similar to those of Avery.<sup>79</sup> While such a fallacy proved untrue, as newspapers often reported pirates' tendencies to target smaller merchant vessels, the public in Britain came to fear but also admire the dangerous sea raiders who inhabited the waters of the Atlantic.

The play serves mostly as a comedy that depicts the pirates, for the most part, as complete fools. The character, Sir Gaudy Tulip, embodies this fallacious representation with his nonsensical lines of dialogue. For example, while discussing with his wife their failed marriage, Tulip explains the process, "first Love kick'd Reason out of Doors, where Reason like a cool Privy-Counsellor waited patiently 'till after Possession, and then summoning the *Posse Com.* of my Senses to his Aid resum'd his seat."<sup>80</sup> The comedic effect of Tulip's ridiculous analogy was a key feature that increased the play's appeal for audiences, but it also created assumptions that pirates were a jovial group of men not to be taken seriously. This did not suggest that the British people started to sympathize with or support the pirates; rather, Johnson's idealized interpretation of the pirates captivated audiences in a way that piqued their interest and led to continued attention on the subject. Thus, by the time the War of the Spanish Succession ended in 1713, a journalistic boom occurred coterminous to the resurgence of piracy in the West Indies.<sup>81</sup> Newspapers were willing to cover the exploits of pirates because there must have been a great demand to read about them. However, what readers found in the papers were stories of violent robberies committed at sea that strayed completely away from the mythologized image Johnson created through his portrayal of Arviragus, the character who Avery was based on.

With information on pirates becoming more available in the 1720s, writers and playwrights began to employ the concept of piracy as a form of discourse on prevalent social issues of the time. For instance, John Gay's *Polly*, the direct sequel to the popular *Beggar's Opera*, was a critique on the colonial English

merchant class by comparing their actions and motivation to pirates.<sup>82</sup> The theatre was a notable center of anti-government rhetoric, vilifying governmental authority through indirect satire much like the press. John Gay's popular ballad opera, *The Beggar's Opera*, satirized the government by implying that criminals in the play were well known politicians; Walpole himself was satirized as Bob Booty, a notable felon in the opera. Theatres were communal spaces in which those in attendance were just as interested in seeing the reactions of other audience members as the performance itself. Walpole was aware of this and saved face at the premiere of *The Beggar's Opera* by laughing along with all of the jokes, even those indirectly referencing him.<sup>83</sup> Though he appeared to enjoy the opera, Walpole was quite enraged by its allegorical portrayal of British politicians. He would have its sequel, *Polly*, banned just before its premiere in 1729.<sup>84</sup> Even though *Polly* would not appear on stage until the end of the eighteenth century, its text was still published and sold to a receptive market in bookstores. Set in the West Indies, English colonists and pirates in *Polly* were intended to be "perceived as alike; all are fortune hunting, opportunistic scavengers."<sup>85</sup> Throughout the opera, themes such as corruption and resistance are at the center of Gay's critique of Britain's leadership, which comprised the majority of the elite. By employing a narrative about pirates who are no less corrupt than the leaders of Britain's colonial enterprise, Gay appropriates pirate discourse to undermine the power and acceptance of the Whig government.

The plantation owner, Ducat, is perhaps the epitome of Gay's criticism of the English merchant class. Much like an actual pirate, Ducat chooses to pursue opportunities only "suitable to my dignity and fortune," as he squanders his money on valuables "merely out of ostentation."<sup>86</sup> Though Ducat never commits any acts of piracy in the opera, Gay hints that his desire for a fortune and his ways of pursuing it mirrors the villainous ways of real pirates. Because members of the government sponsored colonial businessmen, Gay seems to argue that the Whig ministers are no better than pirates since both expect to profit from the riches of the New World.

Given his appointed title, Ducat also acts as the local leader responsible for maintaining the island and its inhabitants. In this respect he abuses his power and position to exert control over those beneath him, primarily to his newly acquired maid, Polly. Unbeknownst to Polly she is sold into Ducat's service to assume the role of his mistress. While the two are alone in his chambers, Ducat tries to have his way with Polly by making sexual advances. In an awkward exchange where Ducat moves in to kiss Polly, she rejects him and goes on to call her master "monstrous rude" for attempting to force her into submission. Ducat then offers to bribe Polly with the money in his possession. She refuses the gesture, maintaining that "tho' I was born and bred in England, I can dare to be poor, which is the only thing now-a-days men are asham'd of."<sup>87</sup> Polly's willingness to preserve her integrity at the cost of living in poverty exacerbates Ducat's greed. Although Ducat declares his ownership over Polly's life and physical body (since it is clear that she is a slave), she retorts, "you cannot rob me of my vertue and integrity: and whatever is my lot, having that, I shall have comfort of hope, and find pleasure in reflection."<sup>88</sup> This particular exchange between Ducat and Polly represents another subtle criticism Gay makes concerning the British elite. The assumption that money could buy obedience suggests the corruption within Britain's leadership. Robert Walpole was known to have utilized such deplorable practices in his conquest for power, resorting to bribery and brute force to command authority. Polly's character in the opera is intended to embody the Britons who were forced to comply with the hegemony of the British state. Those who wanted to resist, like Polly, had to repress their sentiments against the Whig government by recognizing and abiding by the state's political authority.

When pirates attempt to sack the plantation, Ducat is quick to make his escape to an Indian camp filled with armed men as opposed to retaliating against the pirates himself. While meeting with the Indian

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king, Pohotohee, Ducat remarks that having “been a colonel of the militia these ten years” his evasion of the pirates can be justified as a tactical retreat in hopes of combining his forces with the Indians.<sup>89</sup> When Pohotohee suggests that Ducat also take part in the upcoming battle alongside them, given his tenure as a soldier, Ducat defends his reasons to avoid participation by using his status:

A married man, Sir, who carries his wife’s heart about him, and that indeed is a little timorous. Upon promise to her, I am engag’d to quit in case of a battle; and her heart hath ever govern’d me more than my own. Besides, Sir, fighting is not our business; we pay others for fighting; and yet ‘tis well known we had rather part with our lives than our money.<sup>90</sup>

By maneuvering his way through various excuses, Ducat is able to avoid fighting while attempting to save face in front of the Indians whom he regards as inferior. Even though Ducat enjoys the benefits of the power and prestige of his position, he believes that he does not have to be held accountable for the responsibilities his title entails. Much like his political counterparts in London, he is convinced that his social stature allows him to enjoy the seat of power without exercising his authority appropriately; Ducat abuses his power to serve his personal interests. Though Pohotohee immediately sees through his false courage, Ducat nonetheless maintains his sense of superiority over the Indians. The ideological difference between Ducat and Pohotohee captures the arrogance of the British colonial enterprise. Gay asserts that instead of elevating indigenous people regarded as ignorant and uncivilized, colonial representatives would rather hide behind those same “barbarians” when placed in danger, undermining the eminence of the British Empire in its imperial periphery. The result of such cowardice can be seen throughout *Polly* as its Indian characters seem to neither fear nor embrace the European colonial presence. Rather, the British colonists and pirates are viewed as similarly lacking in both honor and virtue.

In addition, pirates represented in the opera furthered the parallel through colonial principles. Macheath, the protagonist of *The Beggar’s Opera*, appears in *Polly* under the guise of a black pirate captain named Morano. In the second act, pirates invade Ducat’s plantation and face resistance by the island’s natives who choose to ally themselves with their colonial overseers. Morano’s lieutenant, Vanderbluff, approaches the upcoming battle with the natives under the impression that “We must beat civilizing into ‘em. To make ‘em capable of common society, and common conversation.”<sup>91</sup> Pirates were regarded as nationless men who abandoned all ties to their home county or were abandoned by the state. Gay alludes to the British colonial ideology of cultivating uncivilized savages through his pirate characters, asserting that the government and pirates are one and the same in this regard, contradicting claims made by the press that the pirates were in fact barbarous vagabonds. Drawing the comparison between political leaders and pirates was intended to contest the Whig party’s ambition to further monopolize power within the government. The Whigs intended to rob Parliament of any political opposition, much in the way that the pirates in *Polly* sought to plunder the Indian treasure for their own personal gain.

An obvious correlation that Gay notes is the fact that both the pirates and colonists share the same ethnographic roots. Since the majority of pirates in the 1720s were English, the Indians in *Polly* automatically associate them with the colonists. An interesting scene that takes place in an abandoned cottage demonstrates how the Indians, victims of colonization, viewed the British and pirates. While prisoner of the pirates, the Indian prince, Cawwawkee, despairingly refers to his captors as “Europeans” as a way of conflating pirates with the other white imperialists. During the interrogation in which the pirates try to ascertain the whereabouts of the Indian treasure from Cawwawkee, the prince remarks, “I have resolution; and pain shall neither make me lie or betray. I will tell thee once more *European*, I am no coward.”<sup>92</sup> Even though Morano is in fact a blackfaced Macheath, he is thrown into the same

category of "Europeans" with all the condemning implications that follow. This suggests that the role of colonial aggressor isn't assigned to the Anglo ethnography, but rather to the brutal deeds inflicted on the island's natives. Macheath's identity as the black pirate captain, Morano, is never revealed publicly until the end of the opera. Therefore, Cawwawkee's use of the "European" moniker is intended to condemn the pirates for acting just like the colonizers. Despite the prince's unwavering commitment to protecting his people, the pirates dismiss his words as naiveté. "But how can you expect anything else from a creature, who hath never seen a civiliz'd country? Which way should he know mankind?"<sup>93</sup> Due to the way in which the Indians associate pirates with the English colonists and manner in which the pirates view the Indians, Gay is able to elicit a parallel between the British colonists and the pirates labelled by them as terrorizing oppressors.

Soon after, Cawwawkee is put in chains along with Polly, who at this point is disguised as a man after escaping Ducat's plantation. The two contemplate promising the pirate guards some of the Indian treasure to secure their freedom. Cawwawkee remains reluctant as he finds little reason to offer the bribe when he knows the pirates would betray him if the roles were reversed. "Those who are corrupt themselves know how to corrupt others. You may do as you please. But whatever you promise for me, contrary to the *European* custom, I will perform. For tho' a knave may break his word with a knave, an honest tongue knows no such distinction."<sup>94</sup> Cawwawkee is alluding to the fact that the pirates are products of the circumstances created by the British government. They act treacherously, treating the Indians inhumanely because they were once subjects of the British Crown. Though the pirates have defected from the British state, they maintain similar practices of exploiting the natives for their valuables and resources. Gay reinforces the analogous nature of the British government and pirates by having the Indian prince keep his promise to the guards.

Polly is arguably one of the more complex characters in the opera. She sets out to the West Indies in search of Macheath, to whom she was wed in *The Beggar's Opera*, going through numerous iterations from proper Englishwoman, to mistress, to cross-dressing pirate, and finally to a well-respected friend of the Indians. It is through her maneuvering across various roles that she survives her tribulations between Ducat, the pirates, and the Indians, all in an effort to be reunited with her husband. Polly embodies the ideal British citizen who never succumbs to the corrupting forces of the New World. While attempting to secure freedom from the pirates, she appeals to the guards' greed: "Think of the chance of war, gentlemen. Conquest is not so sure when you fight against those who fight for their liberties."<sup>95</sup> She negotiates with the pirates to allow herself and Cawwawkee to escape in exchange for the Indian treasure. As previously mentioned, pirates, for the most part, were known to have structured an egalitarian social order that distributed their wealth evenly among the crew. However the pirates in *Polly*, particularly the guards who took the bribe, are more inclined to betray their maritime brethren if it grants the opportunity for greater wealth. Attracted by the offer, one of the pirates contemplate, "[i]f we conquer'd [the Indians], and the booty were to be divided among the crews, what would it amount to? Perhaps this way we might get more than would come to our shares."<sup>96</sup> Gay's portrayal of the pirates in this regard captures their motivations for protecting their own self-interest over the collective interest of the crew. Such a mindset mirrors the ideology of colonists like Ducat, and to a greater extent the Whig ministers in Britain. They all desire wealth and power for the sake of strengthening their reputation, a common ambition found within the British political body.<sup>97</sup>

Such ambitious values of Whig politicians were often subject of criticism in the public sphere, hence the use of the pejorative, "great men," to reference Walpole and his affiliated Whigs. In the opera, Polly's characterization represents a foil to those morals by resisting the corrupting temptations placed in front

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of her. Besides resisting Ducat's money in exchange for her sexual submission earlier in the opera, Polly also refuses to accept any reward from Pohetohee after capturing Morano, and helping the Indians defeat the pirate invaders. Polly exemplifies her modesty by telling the Indian king that the "pleasure in having serv'd such an honourable man is sufficient return."<sup>98</sup> Unlike the other Anglo characters in the opera, Polly's aspirations are pure, as she yearns for nothing more than to be with her husband, who ironically has been close to her the entire time. Her genuine intentions for venturing to the West Indies are what keep her from devolving into what the colonists and pirates become.

But all things considered this attribute does not spare Polly from misfortune. Even though she seizes her freedom from Ducat and the pirates, Polly loses Macheath to the environment of the New World. Macheath had always been notorious highwayman and womanizer who sought to satisfy his own interests. Between *The Beggar's Opera* and *Polly*, he is sent away to the West Indies for the crimes he committed in England. He manages to escape the transport and starts a new life as a pirate under the fabricated identity of Morano. At this point, Macheath ceases to exist in the public as he soon assumes command of a crew and takes a new lover, Jenny. While Polly remains virtuous throughout both operas, it isn't enough to save Macheath from his criminal ways. The dichotomy between Polly's virtue and Macheath's villainy suggests that corruption, greed, and selfish ambitions are irreversible traits in the New World. In addition, the desire to seek a better life in the New World can never be realized. Macheath's reasons for venturing to the West Indies relates to his desire to live freely without the constraints of societal structures like government, the law, and family. Macheath's pirate lifestyle fulfills that ambition only temporarily, as he must pay for his wrongdoings against the Indians and the colony. Polly's aim in the West Indies, while noble, fails to manifest because what she seeks is the impossible: the return of her husband who has already moved on. Even Ducat, perhaps the only major character to come out the conflict unscathed, remains unsuccessful at the end of the opera. His goal in the West Indies is to claim control over all wealth and property within his domain. That lust for power is obstructed when Pohetohee denies Ducat the opportunity to reclaim Polly as a slave.<sup>99</sup> The inability of these characters to achieve their respective ambitions in *Polly* resonates with Gay's criticism of the Whig government. Polly's final lines are, in part, delivered in a ballad upon which she sings, "[f]rail is ambition, how weak the foundation! Riches have wings as inconsistent as wind; my heart is proof against wither temptation, virtue, without them contentment can find."<sup>100</sup> Ambition, no matter how noble, will inevitably lead to the path of ruin. Instead of focusing on individual desires, Gay argues that the Whigs must loosen their grasp on power for the betterment of the entire British nation. It was through the monopolization of political authority that men like Walpole were able to dominate British politics, introducing corruption within the government. The only individuals unaffected by the tragic ending in *Polly* were the Indians because they were willing to work with the colonists whom they despised to defeat a common enemy. Despite ideological differences and colonial oppression, the Indians in the opera were motivated by their honor to protect the collective population on the island. Therefore, Gay's implication is that members of the government, too, should work towards defending the interests and well-being of its citizens, rather than exploit political power for personal gain.

With the war over between the pirates and the colonists and Indians, retribution can be made for the attempted raid. Pohetohee meets with Morano to understand the pirate's reasons for invading the island. The Indian king is quickly infuriated when he learns that Morano views honor, honesty, and other forms of virtue as "incapacities and follies."<sup>101</sup> Morano's irredeemable nature earns him an immediate death sentence without a chance at trial. As he is taken away by guards, he sings "[i]f justice had piercing eyes, like ourselves to look within, she'd find power and wealth a disguise that shelter the worst of our kin."<sup>102</sup> Morano blames his harsh sentence on the fact that it was delivered by the brutal justice of the Indians. His comment suggests that even worse villains exist in both Britain and the New World,

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but due to their reputation and authority, they are able to evade criminalization. Pohetohee's decision to execute Morano without a trial serves as a critique of Britain's own campaign in suppressing pirates. Offering pardons was an effective tool in reducing the pirate population in the West Indies throughout the 1720s. However, with a reduced navy and no way of enforcing British authority, seafaring men continued to commit acts of piracy even after taking the pardon. For Gay, offering amnesty to a criminal was the equivalent of overlooking their crimes. Britain's policy of pardoning piracy demonstrated the inability of the government to address injustices in an appropriate fashion, which also suggested that the state was willing to ignore corruption if certain political leaders stood to benefit.

It is mostly for moral reasons that Pohetohee is so quick to sentence Morano for execution. Disgusted by the pirate's immorality, he responds to Jenny's plea to spare Morano: "Then I have reliev'd you from the society of a monster."<sup>103</sup> Jenny promises that if the Pohetohee acquits Morano for his crime, then she will be determined to start an honest life and guide her husband on a similar path. Pohetohee knows well enough that such a feat would be impossible because Morano's corruption is beyond the point of redemption. He sees Jenny as a product of Morano's perverted ambitions as she too has become tainted with immorality. "Woman, your profligate sentiments offend me; and you deserve to be cut off from society, with your husband. Mercy would be scarce excusable in pardoning you. Have done then. Morano is now under the stroke of justice."<sup>104</sup> By sentencing Morano to death, Pohetohee commits to his efforts in excising the wicked ways of European men from the world. It's even too late for Polly to save Macheath when she removes her disguise and reveals herself to be his wife. Pohetohee agrees to "let the sentence be suspended" since Polly has proven herself as the embodiment of virtue.<sup>105</sup> However, they are all too late to stop the execution and Polly is left a broken hearted widow. By killing off Macheath/Morano, Gay suggests that corruption within British society can never hope to prosper. The irreversible fate of Macheath implies that villainy, across various social organizations, must be removed from the seat of power, for it will only proliferate if it is allowed to remain.

By the end of the opera, Macheath's death is met with the chorus singing "Justice long forbearing."<sup>106</sup> Even though pirates were depicted as the antiheroes in *Polly*, they were still dangerous criminals nevertheless, and needed to face repercussions for their actions. With such stark comparisons made throughout the opera, Gay alludes that the corrupt government under Walpole will eventually fall to ruin, just as the pirates have. Contesting the government's pirate narrative with his own indicated Gay's defiance to Walpole's political order. The government's repression of the opera upon its scheduled premiere proved that the Whigs needed to prevent their enemies from appropriating pirate discourse as their own with the intent of undermining the government.

As a form of recreation, the pirates themselves would even put on their own plays as a way to spend time while on land. A common performance was a "Mock Court of Judicature to try one another for Pyracy." Each member of a crew was given a part and acted out their roles with costumes and props. What is notable about this form of theatrics was its intent to satirize Britain's legal system. A pirate most likely had prior experience inside an English courtroom, which served as a basis for the mock trial's proceedings as well as dialogues of exchange between the Judge and Prisoner.<sup>107</sup> Despite being humorous in nature, the drama accurately captured the sentiments expressed by pirates when put on trial. Often, the character of the Judge was quite exaggerated, threatening to "make it Treason to consider" the prisoner, being a pirate, not guilty for the crime he committed. In addition, he wished nothing more than to see the prisoner hanged, justifying his reasoning with the statement: "[t]here's the law for you, ye Dog" without making any effort to see justice served in a proper manner.<sup>108</sup> The appeal of this sort of play for the pirates was the opportunity to express their frustrations and ridicule the

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English courts. Rediker also suggested that the significance of the play was that it “shows the pirate’s ability to laugh in the face of his own death.”<sup>109</sup> Instead of receiving fair trial that took witness testimony and evidence into account, pirates believed that once captured and placed before a judge they were powerless to make their pleas for being considered not guilty. What better way to come to terms with the inevitability of losing to the system than mockery? After all, an imprisoned pirate’s fate was the noose or gibbet, and to be displayed in a very public place for the purpose of punitive example. The rationale for all this being that the courts preferred to execute those convicted for the sake of maintaining Britain’s preeminence over the high seas.

While plays themselves did little to directly undermine the government’s authority, they help to indicate how the use of the pirate image transformed from a comedic trope to a legitimate form of discourse. Johnson’s *The Successful Pyrate* promoted a romanticized image that garnered attention towards the pirates in print media. However, the public became disillusioned once they read about the true nature of piracy, learning to fear pirates as opposed to underestimating them as amusing drunkards. Gay’s *Polly* used the pirate motif to critique the corruption within the British mercantile system. By comparing the actions of Anglo merchants and colonists to piracy, he illuminated the nefarious nature of those pursuing wealth in the West Indies and within the Walpole administration. The pirates’ own parody of a mock trial served to condemn the courts’ strict judicial practices. Where judges were ready to declare a guilty verdict before a trial even started, appearing before a court became no more than a mere formality before a predetermined end.

The way in which the British government in the early eighteenth century went about presenting the suppression of pirates allowed the state to not only consolidate its authority over various dissenting factions, but also granted the Whig party a prolonged reign of power. Pirates, while the epitome of an unrestrained lifestyle, could not continue to exist on the British imperial periphery and live out their days as truly free men. Even though they had colluded with American and Caribbean colonists, the English government, in the vacuum produced by the war with Spain, instigated the end of legitimized sea marauding, as sailors who turned to piracy after the war were considered criminals that no longer served the interests of the state. They were products of postwar conditions that started to change the political, economic, and cultural institutions in Early Modern Europe.

Since the majority of pirates were of Anglo descent, the British government took it upon itself to systematically defeat piracy in order to maintain healthy relations with the East India Trade Company and improve diplomacy with other European nations that were victimized by piracy. At the same time, however, Britain itself was experiencing domestic tensions from rival political factions such as the Tories, Jacobites, and Catholics in Ireland and Scotland that opposed the reign of a Hanoverian monarch. In an effort to expedite recovery from the war, British politicians started manipulating the public sphere to regain control over the national body. With piracy as a very popular topic in numerous British and American newspapers, readership was guaranteed when the governmental deployed the message that any form of dissent would be dealt with by the absolute force of Great Britain. Pirates were the unlucky initial targets for this propaganda campaign, as they threatened to undermine the state’s dominance over its colonial enterprise before and after the war.

Pirate occupation of the Bahamas may have been the trigger that compelled the British government to start manipulating public opinion with the suppression campaign. Naval victories were lionized by the press, and the demonization of the pirates provided a moral imperative to see piracy and other forms of dissent eradicated. Even though anti-government writers and publishers attempted to appropriate pirate discourse as a way to contest the Whigs in their behavior and governance, the pieces they wrote

had a comparatively small impact on the public's acceptance of Whig hegemony. Much like the way in which pirates were aggressively prosecuted, dissenters within the press were indicted with libel as well as intimidated by hired thugs. The Golden Age of Piracy would meet its end by 1730, with the most notorious pirates killed at sea or hanged ashore. By then, Britain had reclaimed control over the Bahamas and taught the American colonies to despise pirates. Without a place to land, restock supplies, make repairs, or recruit new crewmembers, piracy dramatically declined on the western Atlantic.<sup>110</sup> Surviving pirates either took the royal pardon and forfeit themselves to a life of poverty in England, or sought to continue their accustomed way of life and sailed for the coast of West Africa. Regardless, piracy was no longer a significant issue for Great Britain and those in power could further their political monopoly with little resistance.

While the research of this paper has attempted to connect the suppression of piracy with British state building through manipulation of the public sphere, there are still several dimensions within this topic that have yet to be explored. The most quintessential of these shortcomings would be a precise examination and realization of the varying forms of dissent voiced throughout Britain. Although Catholics, Tories, and Jacobites were identified as the key groups that actively resisted the Whig government, their methods of challenging the government could use an in-depth evaluation to better understand the conditions the British government had to work with at the start of George I's reign. Another aspect of this research not discussed in this paper are the legal implications of piracy during the postwar period. Other areas of further research include an examination of the laws put in place to combat piracy, the treatment of pirates upon their capture and when placed on trial, and the impact that published court proceedings had in shaping the public's view of pirates. Exploring these additional considerations would not only provide greater insight on intersections between piracy, print culture, and the law, but also place piracy as an agent in the development of the Early Modern British legal system.

In short, through the adept use of newspapers and books to publicize its anti-piracy campaign, the Whig government tightened its grip on power by promoting the party's vision of a well-managed state. With enemies everywhere at the start of the Hanoverian regime, the Whigs used newspaper portrayals of the suppression of pirates to demonstrate their determination to brook no opposition. The government demonized the pirates through an "othering" process that depicted them as reprehensible brutes who practiced violence and robbery in their trade. Pirates were hunted down, tried, and executed, with each death marking the government's victory over those who threatened state authority. The existence of pirates in the imperial periphery provided Walpole and his ministers the opportunity to show their willingness to use violence against their enemies, if necessary, but also affirmed that the Whig state was fair and just. Using the suppression of pirates as a propaganda campaign in the public sphere then allowed Walpole's Court Whigs to assert the state's monopoly on violence at home. Thus, the Whig Supremacy in eighteenth century Great Britain was built in pursuit of political plunder and hegemonic gain, atop the corpses of Atlantic pirates.

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<sup>1</sup> The British National Archives (TNA), State Papers (SP) 42/16/38, "Letter concerning a memorial from the planters and merchants of Jamaica," 1 April 1717.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremy Black, *The British Seaborne Empire* (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 101.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, edited by Manuel Schonhorn, (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1999), 132.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Earle, *The Pirate Wars*, (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2003), 164.

<sup>5</sup> Earle, *The Pirate Wars*, 165.

<sup>6</sup> Earle, *The Pirate Wars*, 168.

<sup>7</sup> For more works on the history of Atlantic piracy, see Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700 - 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Peter T. Leeson, *The Invisible Hook: The Hidden Economics of Pirates* (Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009); and Colin Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates: Being the True and Surprising Story of the Caribbean Pirates and the Man Who Brought Them Down* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990*, (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 1.

<sup>9</sup> E. Spencer Wellhofer, "Core and Periphery: Territorial Dimensions of Politics," *Urban Studies* 26 (1989): 1. See also Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, vol. 1 (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

<sup>10</sup> Rosa Ehrenreich Brooks, "Failed States, or the State as Failure?" *The University of Chicago Law Review* 72, No. 4 (2005): 1160.

<sup>11</sup> Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College De France, 1977-78* (London: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2007), 144.

<sup>12</sup> David Marley, *Pirates of the Americas*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 76-77.

<sup>13</sup> Lincoln Faller, "Captain Misson's Failed Utopia, Crusoe's Failed Colony: Race and Identity in New, Not Quite Imaginable Worlds," *The Eighteenth Century* 43, no. 1 (2002): 4.

<sup>14</sup> Faller, "Captain Mission's Failed Utopia," 13.

<sup>15</sup> Black, *The British Seaborne Empire*, 73.

<sup>16</sup> *Piracy Destroy'd* (London 1701) 3-4 in *British Piracy in the Golden Age*, vol. 3, 320.

<sup>17</sup> Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 70.

<sup>18</sup> Robert C. Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War against the Pirates* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 67.

<sup>19</sup> Daniel Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, ed. Manuel Schonhorn, 2nd ed. (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1999), 149.

<sup>20</sup> Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age*, 46-47.

<sup>21</sup> Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War against the Pirates*, 57.

<sup>22</sup> *The Daily Courant*, June 12, 1724, Numb. 7065. All newspaper accounts are reprinted in Joel Baer, ed., *British Piracy in the Golden Age*, vol. 1 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007) unless otherwise noted.

<sup>23</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 211-212.

<sup>24</sup> *The Boston News-Letter*, February 16, 1719.

<sup>25</sup> *The Boston News-Letter*, February 16, 1719. A private man refers to any pirate who was not an officer.

<sup>26</sup> Steven L. Snell, *Courts of Admiralty and Common Law: Origins of the American Experiment in Concurrent Jurisdiction* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2007). 143, note 70. For discussion, see Helen J. Crump, *Colonial Admiralty Jurisdiction in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Royal Empire Society, 1931).

<sup>27</sup> Captain Chaloner Ogle was the naval commander who defeated the most successful pirate in the entire Golden Age, Bartholomew Roberts. Historians have argued that Roberts' death after such a climactic battle with the British navy signaled the end of piracy in the Atlantic.

<sup>28</sup> "A Full Exact Account, of the Tryal of all the Pyrates, Lately Taken by Captain Ogle, on Board the Swallow Man of War, on the Coasts of Guinea," in *British Piracy in the Golden Age: History and Interpretation, 1660-1730*, vol. 3, ed. Joel H. Baer (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007), 98.

<sup>29</sup> TNA, SP 42/17/144, "Proceedings of the Court Admiralty," 31 March 1722. It was not uncommon for sailors to declare they were forced men into piracy while on trial, but witness testimonies exposed the lies in those claims by providing firsthand accounts of the defendant's actions.

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<sup>30</sup> TNA, SP 42/17/144.

<sup>31</sup> TNA, SP 42/17/281.

<sup>32</sup> TNA, SP 42/17/284. The French governor to whom this letter was sent did in fact write a response to the demands made by the British naval officer. Due to my own limitations with the French language, I was unable to translate the document. See SP 42/17/283.

<sup>33</sup> With the war over the following year, Rogers had accumulated substantial debt from loans he took out during the conflict, and was sent back home in debtor's prison. See Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*. 269 & 314.

<sup>34</sup> "A Proclamation for Suppressing the Pirates," 2 August 1721: British Library (BL), Add. MS 61585, fol. 233 & 234.

<sup>35</sup> Julian Hoppit, "Myths of the South Sea Bubble," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 12 (2002). 142.

<sup>36</sup> "South Sea Bubble Short History," Harvard Business School, accessed February 14, 2015, <http://www.library.hbs.edu/hc/ssb/history.html>.

<sup>37</sup> H.T. Dickinson, *Walpole and the Whig Supremacy* (London: The English Universities Press Ltd, 1973), 101.

<sup>38</sup> Dickinson, *Walpole and the Whig Supremacy*, 113 & 116.

<sup>39</sup> For an account on Walpole using hired thugs against his critics, see Joel Baer, ed., *British Piracy in the Golden Age*, (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007), vol. 1, xxxii.

<sup>40</sup> *British Journal*. August 22, 1724.

<sup>41</sup> TNA SP 42/16/30.

<sup>42</sup> Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political & Social History 1688-1832* (New York: Hodder Headline Group, 1997), 128. See also Jeremy Black, *Culture in Eighteenth-Century England: A Subject for Taste* (London: Hambledon and London, 2005).

<sup>43</sup> O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century*, 128.

<sup>44</sup> O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century*, 129.

<sup>45</sup> Baer, *British Piracy in the Golden Age*. vol 1, xxxii.

<sup>46</sup> Baer, *British Piracy in the Golden Age*. vol 1, xxxiii.

<sup>47</sup> *The Boston News-Letter*, March 2, 1719.

<sup>48</sup> *Boston News-Letter*, February 11, 1725.

<sup>49</sup> *Boston News-Letter*, February 11, 1725.

<sup>50</sup> Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age*, 48.

<sup>51</sup> *The Boston News-Letter*, August 22, 1720.

<sup>52</sup> *The Boston News-Letter*, August 22, 1720.

<sup>53</sup> *The American Weekly Mercury*, September 22, 1720.

<sup>54</sup> *The American Weekly Mercury*, September 22, 1720.

<sup>55</sup> *The American Weekly Mercury*, September 22, 1720.

<sup>56</sup> *The Weekly Journal: or, British Gazetteer*, July 29, 1721.

<sup>57</sup> *The Weekly Journal: or, British Gazetteer*, July 29, 1721.

<sup>58</sup> *The Weekly Journal: or, British Gazetteer*, July 29, 1721.

<sup>59</sup> *The Weekly Journal: or, British Gazetteer*, July 29, 1721.

<sup>60</sup> *The Weekly Journal: or, British Gazetteer*, July 29, 1721.

<sup>61</sup> *The British Journal*, September 22, 1722.

<sup>62</sup> *The Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post*, August 10, 1723.

<sup>63</sup> *The Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post*, August 10, 1723. A "Boltsprit" is a variation of the word "bowsprit," which is a pole of wood extending from the forward-most part of the ship's bow to support the main sail.

<sup>64</sup> *Mist's Weekly Journal*, January 6, 1728.

<sup>65</sup> *Mist's Weekly Journal*, January 6, 1728.

<sup>66</sup> *Mist's Weekly Journal*, May 18, 1728.

<sup>67</sup> *Mist's Weekly Journal*, May 18, 1728.

<sup>68</sup> *London Gazette*. September 15, 1717.

<sup>69</sup> *Tryals Of Thirty-Six Persons for Piracy, Twenty-Eight of them upon full Evidence were found Guilty, and the Rest Acquitted*. (Boston: 1723) in Joel Baer, ed., *British Piracy in the Golden Age*, vol. 3, 191.

<sup>70</sup> Arne Bialuschewski, "Daniel Defoe, Nathaniel Mist, and the 'General History of the Pyrates,'" *Bibliographical Society of America* 98, no. 1 (March 2004): 31. While most scholars cite *A General History* with its given pseudonym, Captain Charles Johnson, Bialuschewski proposes the theory that the true author was in fact Nathaniel Mist who was a sailor, a capable writer, and "had compelling motives to turn away from political journalism and write a book that was likely to attract a large readership" as he was in constant financial trouble. Therefore, Mist's review of *A General History* sought to undermine the Whigs as well as promote sales for his book.

<sup>71</sup> *The Weekly Journal or Saturday's-Post*. May 23, 1724.

<sup>72</sup> *The Weekly Journal or Saturday's-Post*. May 23, 1724.

<sup>73</sup> *The Weekly Journal or Saturday's-Post*. August 29, 1724.

<sup>74</sup> *The Weekly Journal or Saturday's-Post*. August 29, 1724.

<sup>75</sup> *The Weekly Journal or Saturday's-Post*. August 29, 1724.

<sup>76</sup> Baer, *British Piracy in the Golden Age*, vol.1, 285.

<sup>77</sup> The ambiguity of pirates persisted until Captain Charles Johnson's *History of the Pyrates* in 1724. Before then, most publications and productions used pirates more for comedic effect than actual tools for social commentary.

<sup>78</sup> Charles Johnson, *The Successful Pyrate* (London, 1713). Not to be confused with the above author.

<sup>79</sup> David Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and the Reality of Life Among the Pirates* (New York: Random House Trade, 1996), 23-24.

<sup>80</sup> Johnson, "The Successful Pyrate," 17. *Posse comitatus* is Latin for "Power of the Country" by which, under Common Law, a sheriff could call upon the service of men over the age of fifteen to help prevent civil disorder. This was a very common practice during the English Civil War.

<sup>81</sup> *17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century Burney Collection of Newspapers*. A simple keyword search of the word "piracy" yielded the most results between 1715 and 1728, which was the peak of piratical activity in the post-Spanish war climate.

<sup>82</sup> Robert G. Dryden, "John Gay's Polly: Unmasking Pirates and Fortune Hunters in the West Indies," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34, no. 4 (2001): 540.

<sup>83</sup> Hal Gladfelder, "Hal Gladfelder on The Beggar's Opera and Polly."

<sup>84</sup> Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 120.

<sup>85</sup> Dryden, "John Gay's Polly: Unmasking Pirates and Fortune Hunters in the West Indies," 541.

<sup>86</sup> John Gay, *Polly: An Opera. Being the Second Part of the Beggar's Opera in The Poetical Works of John Gay*, ed. G.C. Faber (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 1. 1. 41 & 48. References are to act, scene, and line.

<sup>87</sup> Gay, *Polly*, 1.11.46-47.

<sup>88</sup> Gay, *Polly*, 1.11.75-77.

<sup>89</sup> Gay, *Polly*, 3.1.8.

<sup>90</sup> Gay, *Polly*, 3.1.10-14.

<sup>91</sup> Gay, *Polly*, 2.8.33-34.

<sup>92</sup> Gay, *Polly*, 2.8.48-49.

<sup>93</sup> Gay, *Polly*, 2.8.57-58.

<sup>94</sup> Gay, *Polly*, 2.11.52-55.

<sup>95</sup> Gay, *Polly*, 2.12.14-15.

<sup>96</sup> Gay, *Polly*, 2.12.24-26.

<sup>97</sup> Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War against the Pirates*, 43. While Ritchie's work focused on late seventeenth century Whig politics, that same ambition for power in Parliament resonated throughout Walpole's Whig Ministry.

<sup>98</sup> Gay, *Polly*, 3.12.17.

<sup>99</sup> Gay, *Polly*, 3.15.10.

<sup>100</sup> Gay, *Polly*, 3.15.34-37.

<sup>101</sup> Gay, *Polly*, 3.11.43.

<sup>102</sup> Gay, *Polly*, 3.11.75-77.

<sup>103</sup> Gay, *Polly*, 3.13.2.

<sup>104</sup> Gay, *Polly*, 3.13.24-26.

<sup>105</sup> Gay, *Polly*, 3.13.41.

<sup>106</sup> Gay, *Polly*, 3.15.61.

<sup>107</sup> Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age*, 155-161.

<sup>108</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*. 292-294. A full transcript and story of the crew that performed the mock trial in 1722 can be found in the Captain Anstis chapter.

<sup>109</sup> Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age*, 157.

<sup>110</sup> Colonies that willingly allowed pirates to enter their harbors and procure supplies were what Mark Hanna calls "pirate nests." It wouldn't be until the declining public approval of pirates that some of these havens would become the most aggressive persecutors of all men charged for piracy. See Mark Gillies Hanna, "The Pirate Nest: The Impact of Piracy on Newport, Rhode Island and Charles Town, South Carolina, 1670-1740" (Dissertation, Harvard University, 2006).