University of Southampton

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The Captain and his Fellows:

Reading Editions of *A General History of the Pyrates, 1724 – 1734*

By

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Abstract

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*A General History of the Pyrates* purports to tell the true and entirely accurate stories of ‘the most notorious pirates’. It originates many of the images of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century piracy in circulation today and has been extensively mined as an archive for information about historical pirates. However, the *General History* is a complex literary fiction. This thesis meets the need for a robust understanding of the early life of this text. This involves examining both the text’s publishing history and the language, form, and content of editions published between 1724 and 1734 to interrogate the figure of the pirate generated by this influential text. This thesis establishes that there is no authoritative edition, and instead approaches the *General History* as a changeable tradition of narratives concerning pirates set in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. I compare across and within editions to argue that the crew and the captain jointly create the pirate. This thesis demonstrates that the pirate contributes to, but also exceeds, developing notions of the criminal. This produces a new reading of the pirate as a literary type.

Chapter one establishes a publishing history of the *General History* between 1724 and 1734. It highlights understudied formats to establish a comprehensive account of the text’s early life within its publishing contexts. This chapter underlines that no two editions are exactly the same in this ten-year period and sets the foundation for why these differences are significant. Chapter two initiates the analysis of the pirate. By placing editions of the text in conversation with antecedent outlaw and contemporaneous highwayman narratives, this chapter argues that pirates are fellows aboard a ship. These fellowships are challenged by treachery, but are sustained by oaths and notions of honour to develop pirate homosocial relations. Chapter three argues that the *General History* presents captaincy as a spectrum of qualities and behaviours. It contextualises notions of the hero and adventure to argue that the text creates captains imbued with the affective qualities of early modern heroes who centre ideas of acquisition and predation. This creates a new iteration of the literary adventurer, for whom venture is a key concern. These chapters collectively argue that the *General History* is a product of long established ideas of adventure and outlawry that speaks to the concerns of the emerging eighteenth century.
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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Rebecca Louise James

The Captain and his Fellows: Readings Editions of *A General History of the Pyrates, 1724 – 1734*.

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission;

Signature:                                      Date: 29/01/2020
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Introduction

Roberts himself made a gallant Figure, at the Time of the Engagement, being dressed in a rich crimson Damask Wastcoat, and Breeches, a red Feather in his Hat, and a Gold Chain ten Times round his Neck, a Sword in his Hand, and two pair of Pistols hanging at the End of a Silk Sling, which was flung over his Shoulder (according to the Fashion of the Pyrates;) and is said to have given his Orders with Boldness, and Spirit.¹

Flamboyantly dressed in colourful finery, armed to the teeth, commanding with courage and vigour, Roberts is a compelling imagination of the pirates of 'the great phase of piracy, in fact and fiction, the so-called “golden age”.² While robbery at sea has existed since the beginnings of maritime endeavour, it is the factual and fictional swashbucklers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that are immortalised in the Anglo-American cultural imagination as the most piratical of pirates, largely thanks to A General History of the Pyrates (1724 – 1734).³

Early eighteenth-century audiences who were more or less geographically distant from the depredations of Anglo-American pirates voraciously consumed material about individuals and crews, as they were mythologised and sensationalised in books and the periodical press. These factual and fictional figures prompted excitement and intrigue, and spawned fantastical tales about pirates thriving and failing in ‘exotic’ locations. Published in 1724, as the ‘so called “golden age”’ of piracy came to a close, the General History is constituted by a series of interconnected chapters that each focus on a pirate captain and his crew. It purports to present the ‘truth’ and ‘authentick Relations’ about a collection of pirates active in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.⁴ Between 1724 and 1734 the text was proliferated in a dozen different versions. Over the next 300 years the General History was republished in a number of formats, and no more than fifty years passed between new iterations. Various parts were inserted into other texts about piracy, and served as

³ I use A General History of the Pyrates to refer to the text, which was published under a number of variant titles between 1724 and 1734.
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inspiration for further tales. More recently, the advent of e-readers and audiobooks has resulted in a number of cheap digital editions, including at least one audiobook.

I. Pirates in history and literature

Piracy was not a new cultural phenomenon in the eighteenth century, nor was it a new subject in literature. Claire Jowitt argues that 'since classical times there have been frequent literary references to pirates; indeed pirates were something of a stock feature of classical romance'. Neil Rennie concurs as he describes some of the earliest imaginings of pirates in Homer and Greek romances, in which they 'serve[d] the authors’ purpose by capturing the hero or heroine to delay the happy ending'. The pirate was a particularly noteworthy figure during the English Renaissance, as Jowitt explains: 'pirates often appear as characters in Renaissance literature, and there are countless descriptions of seaborne crime in the historical record'. The General History was produced in the context of long and varied literary histories.

Pirates and privateers in the Renaissance explored an ever-expanding maritime sphere. They challenged and contributed to the development of England's place in the global economy. As Barbara Fuchs comments 'under Elizabeth, England pursued a highly aggressive para-naval policy towards Spain; in the 1570's and 80's, piracy became England's belated answer to Spain's imperial expansion'. She observes that 'glorified with the name of “privateers”, Englishmen such as Francis Drake plundered Spanish colonies and enriched England's treasury'; however, piracy came to be 'a constant source of tension and embarrassment for the Jacobean state as it focuse[d] on trade as a means to empire' (p. 45). For Fuchs the 'varying roles [of pirates] serve to chart the changes in England's imperial expansion, from a rather desperate willingness to attack Spain in the Elizabethan years to a more restrained

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5 Marcus Rediker observes that three nineteenth century texts ‘all placed the recent piracies [...] alongside the pirate narratives of the “Golden Age”, reprinting large parts of the classic account by Captain Charles Johnson’. (Marcus Rediker, Outlaws of the Atlantic: Sailors, Pirates and Motley Crews in the Age of Sail (London: Verso, 2014), p. 153.)


8 Rennie, p. 12.

9 Jowitt, p. 1.

10 Jowitt, p. 8.

focus on the expansion of commerce during the reign of James’ (p. 46). These early modern pirates were key to England’s imagining itself as a great maritime power.

In this earlier literature, Jowitt explains, pirates were used to explore key concerns of the early modern period, including social organisation, jurisdiction, exploration, and authority. She identifies a set of ‘key historical and literary “pirate” figures’ who ‘permeate different cultural registers’ within drama, travel writing, poetry, ballads, broadsheets and prose romances. These representations ‘tend to be ambivalent, depending on both the individual who was being described and the person who identified them as a “pirate”’ (p. 8). This ambivalence produced figures that ‘addressed key cultural and political dilemmas of the time including concerns about England’s position within an expanding world and whether the nation could provide the type of men required for successful overseas adventure’ (p. 13).

Jowitt argues that literary representations of pirates ‘became more complex’ due to ‘increasing generic sophistication and changing political circumstances between regimes’ (p. 15). She contends that:

...in a period of English history marked by ambitions for global expansion, the figure of the pirate was a suggestive one. Wily and commercially astute, as well as notoriously fierce and tremendously brave, pirate figures possess diverse cultural utility: when properly managed they are highly serviceable tools in the formation of an English maritime and colonial empire. (p. 2)

Jowitt’s work demonstrates that pirates were significant in the literature of the Renaissance, particularly in imaginations of England as a colonial and maritime power.

The Renaissance is famed for pirates; however, 1680 – 1730 is most commonly understood as the ‘golden age’ of Anglo-American piracy. Joel Baer comments ‘from the mid-seventeenth century to the early eighteenth century, an epidemic of piracy swept across the world’s oceans, caused by the instability and opportunism of the new age’. He argues that there were three phases to this particular period of pirate activity: ‘1660 – 1690, state-sponsored piracy’, ‘1690 – 1700, Indian Ocean Piracy’, and ‘1700 – 1722, “at war with the world”’. In contrast, Hans Turley narrows the period, arguing that ‘in 1694, the “golden age” of the pirate exploded into popular consciousness with the exploits of Captain Avery. [...] This “golden age” ended only thirty years later, around the time of the publication of the first edition’ of the General History. Marcus Rediker also suggests that there are three ‘distinct generations of pirates: the buccaneers of 1650 – 1680 [...] the pirates of the 1690’s, the generation of Henry

12 Jowitt, p. 2.
14 Baer, Pirates, p. 17.
Introduction

Avery and William Kidd [...] [and] the pirates of the years 1716 – 1726'. Elsewhere he observes that ‘the Anglo-American pirates active between 1716 and 1726 occupied a grand position in the long history of robbery at sea. Their numbers, near five thousand, were extraordinary, and their plunderings were exceptional in both volume and value’. Rediker argues that the pirates featured in the first volume of the General History were the most numerous and effective pirates of the ‘golden age’. David Wilson observes that ‘after 1722, Atlantic piracy declined rapidly to the extent that the historiography has generally declared that the golden age of piracy ended in 1726’. Pulling together the work of Baer, Turley, Rediker, and Wilson we can see that while they disagree on the eras within the ‘golden age’, they generally agree that the end of this period coincided with the early life of the General History.

While there is some dispute over the periodization and utility of the phrase ‘the golden age of piracy’, it is nevertheless agreed that a meaningful number of crews committed acts that were defined as piracy in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Their activity interrupted shipping, diverted goods between communities, and provided an alternative homosocial space for mariners. The impact of this piracy is widely contested. Rediker argues that pirates ‘wreaked havoc in the Atlantic system by capturing hundreds of merchant ships’ and disrupted colonial economies. In contrast, Mark Hanna and David J Starkey argue that pirates contributed to colonial economies. Hanna suggests that pirate activity was ‘integral to the political and social development of the colonial maritime communities that depended upon these adventurers’ goods and services,’ because they re-directed goods that would have otherwise been unavailable. Starkey similarly asserts that ‘in providing goods and services to a range of consumers [...] piracy was a facet of the markets which governed trading and shipping activity’. Meanwhile, Margarette Lincoln argues ‘the history of piracy is essential to the story of imperial ambition in the period 1680 – 1730’. These readings agree that late

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19 A roundtable held at ‘The Problem of Piracy’ conference at the University of Glasgow in 2019, discussed whether ‘the golden age of piracy’ is still a relevant periodization as we broaden understandings of piracy beyond Anglo-American and European histories.
seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century pirates were significant in the development of commerce and colonialism.

Neil Rennie observes a corresponding boom in literature about pirates in this period, suggesting that pirates flourished both 'distantly, invisibly, at sea in ships, and also legibly, saleably, on land in print'. Rennie argues that our cultural understanding of the pirate is created as much by the literature of this period as by the actions of thieves at sea. As Lincoln observes, 'the history of piracy is as much about rhetoric as it is about actual events'. She suggests that the representation of piracy shifted in this period. In her reading, actual pirate activity promoted imperialism, whereas their literary counterparts were increasingly characterised 'as a social plague that conflicted with the new commercial policy of the state'. Rennie suggests that these 'fictional pirates are an invasion of the high seas by the venturesome hacks of London, redeploying the pirates to meet the aspirations, political and commercial, of new, emerging readers with pennies to spend on pirates of the mind'. The 'golden age' of piracy was also a 'golden age' of pirate literature.

Claims of historical accuracy and eyewitness testimony are key rhetorical devices in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century pirate narratives. One of the first of these texts was Alexander Esquemelin's *Buccaneers of America*, originally published in Dutch in 1678. It was translated into Spanish in 1681, English in 1684, and German in 1689, with further English editions published in 1685, 1699, and 1704. It was one of a collection of 'buccaneer' narratives published in the late seventeenth century, which included William Dampier's *New Voyage round the World* (1697). *Buccaneers* is the purported autobiography of Esquemelin, who claimed to have sailed on a number of buccaneer raids as a barber-surgeon between 1670 and 1674. It focuses on Henry Morgan, but also features other buccaneers like Lolonois, Bartholemew Portuges, and Roche Brasiliano. According to Lincoln, these representations make *Buccaneers* a key text in the construction of 'the myth of the swashbuckling pirate'. *Buccaneers* is also a key text because it claims to be an accurate account based upon eyewitness testimony. Rennie observes that Esquemelin 'claimed to write as an "eye-witness", a status which has been disputed, though his accounts tally generally – if not completely – with information from other sources and colonial records'. However, Peter

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24 Rennie, p. 1.
25 Lincoln, p. 3.
26 Lincoln, p. 139.
27 Rennie, p. 33.
29 Ibid.
30 Lincoln, p. 11.
31 Rennie, p. 19.
Introduction

Earle's research using Spanish archives suggests that *Buccaneers* is 'never totally and utterly wrong' but that Esquemelin 'makes too many elementary mistakes', likely because he spent a limited amount of time aboard selected ships. As Richard Frohock summarises 'Earle finds much evidence that Esquemelin misrepresented events'. *Buccaneers* thus imagines historical pirates as literary characters in a purportedly accurate text. It has a clear influence on the *General History*, which adapted and expanded the rhetorical use of apparent eyewitness testimony.

A single pirate, Captain Avery, was the particular focus of pirate literature in the 1690's and 1700's. Avery captured the attention of British audiences with his infamous plunder of the Great Mogul's ship, the Ganj-i-sawai. He was later mythologised as the leader of a pirate community that lived in Madagascar off the profits of their plunder. Joel Baer, Stephanie Jones, and Frederick Burwick and Manushag Powell discuss the pamphlets, plays, and broadside ballads about this pirate. Jones notes:

> as Joel Baer has traced, talk of a fabulously wealthy pirate community living on or just offshore Madagascar had reached such a pitch by 1708 that plans to repatriate the pirates – and more crucially their wealth – were being proposed to the House of Commons as a means to pay national debts.

These tales impacted English readers and the representation of pirates within English culture. Avery was imagined in a number of texts, including *A copy of verses lately composed by Captain Henry Avery* (1696), the *Life and Adventures of Captain John Avery, the English Pirate (rais'd from a Cabin boy to a King) now in possession of Madagascar* by Adrian van Broeck (1709), and was at the centre of Charles Johnson's 1713 play, *The Successful Pyrate*, as the pirate king Arivagus. A further anonymous text about Avery, *The King of Pirates*, was published in 1720. In the same year Daniel Defoe published *Captain Singleton*, which 'appropriates some of Avery's exploits [but] relegates the man himself to the margins of Captain Bob's grand adventures with Quaker William'. Singleton nevertheless leveraged the Avery story on its title page, claiming that the text included 'an Account of [Singleton's] many

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36 Jones, p. 72.
38 Burwick and Powell, p. 29.
Adventures and Pyracies with Captain Avery’. Burwick and Powell identify how Avery was celebrated and aggrandized through the 1700’s and 1710’s, before a backlash ‘began in the 1720's’. Many of these texts positioned themselves against previous works, claiming to tell the ‘authentic’ story of this pirate. As Rennie notes ‘exposing the fiction […] has become an essential part of the Avery fiction, and plausible realism the medium for doing so’. The General History develops this trend, using a revision of the Avery narrative to begin its expanded ‘history’ of the pirates of the ‘golden age’.

The General History was part of a later-early modern literary tradition that foregrounded pirates and piracy. However, the afterlife and impact of this text make it the most influential of those mentioned here. For example, Esquemelin’s autobiography ‘became forgotten as the centuries wore on’, according to Turley, as ‘editions came out less frequently during the nineteenth century’ and ‘in the twentieth century Exquemelin’s name was forgotten, except by fans of the buccaneers’. Turley suggests that ‘the glamour of the most notorious pirates of the early eighteenth century soon outstripped the celebrity of even the most popular buccaneers’. As I have noted, some form of the General History continued to be printed throughout the ensuing 300 years. It was popular in both its contemporary moment, and with later generations of readers.

II. Why the General History?

The General History has influenced literary and cultural productions featuring pirates over the last 300 years, and more recent historiography of piracy produced since the 1920’s. The General History has intensively pervaded the popular perception of pirates, which renders the study of both this text, and in particular, its early life, significant. Its impact can be seen across a number of nineteenth-, twentieth-, and twenty-first-century representations of the pirate. Robert Louis Stevenson’s editor recommended it to him while he was writing Treasure Island (1883), although which iteration Stevenson read while writing his own iconic pirate tale is unknown. It is also likely that Sir Walter Scott drew on the General History as he wrote his story of John Gow in The Pirate (1822). One of the two abridgements found in his library at Abbotsford suggests that he read enough of one edition to produce a contents list written in

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39 Rennie, p. 35.
40 Burwick and Powell, p. 29.
41 Rennie, p. 31.
42 Turley, pp. 36, 164.
43 Turley, p. 36.
44 Rennie, p. vi.
his own hand. The General History plausibly influenced the pirate narratives of two of the biggest writers of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Film and television representations of the pirate also draw upon images introduced by the General History. As Isabel Karremann identifies, Captain Jack Sparrow from Disney's The Pirates of the Caribbean echoes the imagery introduced by the General History, particularly the accounts of Blackbeard and Roberts. She argues that Johnny Depp's pirate is indebted to images first depicted in the General History despite claims that he 'modelled Jack Sparrow on rock-star legend Keith Richards and, less prominently, on the womanizing cartoon-skunk Pepe Le Pew'. Similarly, Black Sails (2014 – 2017), a televised pre-history to Treasure Island, draws upon characters and narratives from the General History. Even 300 years later the text continues to mould our image of the eighteenth-century pirate.

The General History is significant as both a foundational text in our understanding of representations of piracy and as a text produced within the early eighteenth-century book trade. It engages with concerns developed in the transition between systems of economic and social organisation in the Anglo-American world. Moreover, as a literary text it brings together a number of literary traditions developed and moulded by the concerns of the early eighteenth-century. In order to understand the text's continuing influence we need to understand the early editions, which in turn requires an understanding of its significance in the early eighteenth-century literary market.

In many ways, the early life of the General History can be seen as a microcosm of the book trade in this period. In just ten years it was published in octavo, translated, serialised, abridged, pirated, and collected with other narratives of rogues. This pirate book underlines the many ways in which early eighteenth-century readers could, and did, consume printed texts. These different forms made the General History available to a spectrum of eighteenth-century readers. Examining the early life of this cultural product thus develops a greater understanding of the shape of the book trade as a whole, and how individual texts were disseminated within it.

The General History's nuanced and complex approach to ideas of fact and fiction is also a product of contemporary cultures. This literary text claims to be entirely factual, yet it

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46 Isabel Karreman, "'The Sea Will Make a Man of Him?': Hypervirility, Effeminacy, and the Figure of the Queer Pirate in the Popular Imagination from the Early Eighteenth-Century to Hollywood', Gender Forum, 32 (2011), 68–85.
47 Karreman, p. 69.
invents substantial portions and blends fact and fiction throughout. These features create a text that promises the whole story of the most famous pirates, promises to fill gaps in the historical record that might otherwise be left unknown and unknowable, and offers an alternative to sources like legal documents and Admiralty records. This character makes the General History a tempting prospect for historians of piracy and of the early modern Atlantic. As a result, both popular histories of piracy and more rigorous accounts of eighteenth-century piracy use it as a source. However, it is a product of the early eighteenth-century’s complicated approach to notions of fact, fiction, history, and truth. Recognising this develops a greater understanding of the complexities of this text, and in turn produces further insight into how early eighteenth-century texts negotiated these ideas.

III. **What does the text mean by ‘history’?**

Like many contemporary texts, the General History defends the use of the word ‘history’ in its title, positions itself in opposition to novels, and emphasises that the content is ‘true’. The prefaces to the octavo editions particularly convey these ideas. These paratexts first attempt to establish the veracity of the content by actively defending the narratives of two female pirates. They acknowledge that the women’s lives ‘may appear a little Extravagant’, but argue that ‘they are never the less true for seeming so’. According to the prefices, these accounts should be approached as accurate life stories. These narratives represent the unbelievable elements of the text; this section can therefore be seen as a defence of the whole. The prefices imply that if these unbelievable narratives are true, then the rest of the text is also accurate. The author uses the trial record to evidence the existence of these women, then suggests that any information not available elsewhere is not invented, but is the product of the author’s diligence – that s/he was ‘more inquisitive into the circumstances of their past lives’ (sig. A4 verso). We could read this insistence on accuracy ironically, as a gesture to the fictionality weaved throughout. In one sense, the prefices echo the found manuscript or diary device used in other early eighteenth-century narratives when it describes this supposed investigation.

These paratexts then offer two ways of reading the text; either as a novel, or as a factual account. It comments: ‘if there are some Incidents and Turns in their Stories, which may give them a little the Air of a Novel, they are not invented or contrived for that Purpose’ (sig. A4 verso)


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In this moment the text tacitly acknowledges its own literariness as it references the unstable and nascent category of the novel. The prefaces legitimate reading the General History as a generically unstable fiction, even as they attempt to argue the opposite. In fervently asserting that the text is not fiction, The General History opens the possibility of reading the text as one would read many of the fictional texts that also made these claims.

Subsequently, the prefaces defend the use of the word 'history': 'I presume we need make no Apology for giving the Name of a History to the following Sheets, though they contain nothing by the Actions of a Parcel of Robbers’ (sig. A4 verso - recto). This section addresses a presumed response to the text: that the topic makes calling it a history inappropriate. The language used here is defensive; in presuming 'there is no need' the prefaces suggest that some readers will respond negatively to the text claiming to be a history. The preface then defines history: 'It is Bravery and Stratagem in War which makes Actions worthy of Record; in which Sense the Adventures, here related will be thought deserving that Name' (sig. A4 recto). Here, ideas of adventure and the lives of great men make something history, rather than ideas of 'truth' or ‘facticity’. Thus, the text does not address potential accusations of falsity here, but rather challenges the idea that the lives of rogues cannot be fittingly considered history. Yet, the issue of truth was clearly a concern, because amendments to the second edition directly comment:

some Gentlemen have rais’d an Objection against the Truth of its Contents, viz. that it seems calculated to entertain and divert.—If the Facts are related with some Agreeableness and Life, we hope it will not be imputed as a Fault.\(^{51}\)

The author claims that the General History contains both fact and truth. S/he calls upon an external authority that can verify the truth of the material:

we can assure them that the Sea-faring Men, that is all that know the Nature of these Things, have not been able to make the least Objection to its Credit:—And he will be bold to affirm, that there is not a Fact or Circumstance in the whole Book, but he is able to prove by credible Witnesses. (p. 5 - 6)

Like other contemporary texts, which claimed their source was some hitherto undiscovered document, the General History gestures to something beyond the text that confirms the veracity of its content. For example, Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels claims a set of papers written by ‘Mr Gulliver’ as the source of the text, while other texts refer to previously unknown diaries or letters.\(^{52}\) This addition demonstrates a level of playfulness, which in turn suggests that these claims could be rhetorical devices. Examining the paratext across editions of the General History opens up questions about the character and genre of the text. Contextualising contemporary approaches to truth and history begin to unpick the nuances of this text; however, the hybrid nature of the General History resists simplistic assessment.


Those who use the *General History* as a source rarely pay attention to the genre and form of the text. They often accept the text’s protestations, or argue that it has been proven accurate. Rediker, for example, lists the *General History* amongst a range of sources without any differentiation. He emphasises reliability and discusses authorship, not form or genre.\(^{53}\) This approach distances the text from its eighteenth-century literary contexts. However, terms like ‘history’, ‘true’, and ‘fact’ were not necessarily used in the early eighteenth-century in ways we might recognise today. As work by Robert Mayer, Leonard Davis, and Kate Loveman demonstrate, knowing and educated readers and writers who understood the multiple concepts these terms could convey populated the eighteenth century.

Kate Loveman argues that early eighteenth-century authors could mean a number of things when they claimed a work was true – ‘they might mean “factual”, “probable”, “morally correct”; “generally approved” or “officially sanctioned”. Dextrous or unconscious eliding of these and other meanings were common’.\(^{54}\) Loveman’s analysis suggests that the prefaces are not necessarily claiming factual accuracy by calling the *General History* true. Instead, these claims could indicate that the text presents probable narratives, or those that are ‘morally correct’ in condemning piracy. Early eighteenth-century notions of fact and truth were complex.

The same is true of history. According to Robert Mayer, history could mean ““narrative” as well as “true account” and as “true account” it meant both “essentially or morally true narrative” and “factual account”. It also meant both “past events” and an account of such events, what we often call historiography’.\(^{55}\) Documentary material and evidence from testimony was not a prerequisite for something to be considered history, as Mayer notes:

> “history” often referred to well made narratives that represented generally accepted versions of events written without reference to any original research, but it also referred to accounts that were rooted in an attempt to establish what was or could be known about a given event or person: “matters of fact”. (p. 8)

The use of history in the title should be considered in the context of this discourse.

A consideration of how contemporaries defined and understood history clarifies how we might approach the interplay of detail corroborated by the historical record and fictive elements within this text. Mayer argues that:


the historical discourse of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England [...] featured a taste for the marvelous, a polemical cast, a utilitarian faith, a dependence upon personal memory and gossip, and a willingness to tolerate dubious material for practical purposes, all of which led to the allowance of fiction as a means of historical representation. (p. 5)

Mayer argues that the 'Baconian historiography' produced in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries frequently included fiction (p. 4). He acknowledges that his account of history writing contrasts with other scholarship of early modern historiography. Other scholars argue that a 'historical revolution' took place that included:

- new attitudes toward evidence and proof,
- a new devotion to facts rooted in the conviction that in historical accounts 'truth' was equivalent to 'fact,' and the idea that one of the historian's chief tasks was 'the discovery, criticism, and editing of what we would call primary materials'. (p. 8 – 9)

However, Mayer suggests that this 'antiquarian' approach was one of several kinds of historiography written in early modern England. He asserts that 'Baconian historiography' was equally prominent. Mayer also identifies a further kind of history, 'a form of fiction that asserted its difference from and opposition to romance and stipulated a claim to historicity even as it acknowledged its imaginative status' (p. 141). Mayer references the work of Behn, Manley, Nashe, and Delaney as examples of this type. Accordingly, none of the multiple contemporary approaches to history dominated historical writing in this period (p. 20).

Following Mayer, I argue that these approaches are equally important when contextualising the *General History*.

Mayer's work suggests two possible ways to read the *General History*: as a history that included invented material, in the model of 'Baconian historiography', or as a fictional narrative presented to readers 'as a species of "history"' (p. 146). Mayer quotes Michael McKeon's argument that 'the claim to historicity is no less a rhetorical trope than verisimilitude' (p. 142). McKeon suggests that works that claim historicity for themselves are similar to works of fiction that claimed to reflect some kind of reality or truth, in that both moves are rhetorical tropes deployed by texts. Fictive works, like *Gulliver's Travels* and *Robinson Crusoe*, often used this kind of language in their paratexts. *Robinson Crusoe*, for example, uses similar language to the *General History* when it claims that 'the editor believes the thing to be a just history of fact; neither is there any appearance of fiction in it', while *Gulliver's Travels* comments that 'there is an air of truth apparent through the whole'. The moves made by the *General History's* prefatory material are contextualised by the well-established and playful claims to veracity one finds in fictional works in this period.

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Contemporary comment on the General History suggests a further alternative: reading it as a secret history. A lead article in Weekly Journal or Saturday’s Post quotes an alleged conversation about how we should read this text:

Why don’t you see, says he, that all this shim-sham Story of Pyrates is an impudent Libel upon great Men?---- We protested we could never have found it out.---- Whereupon he snatch’d the Paper, and told us, 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; --- at that he wondered even we could not see it, --- adding very civilly, that any Fool might have found that out.57

This article suggests that the characters allude to prominent individuals, making the text a kind of secret history. However, I am not convinced by this argument, and instead approach this article as an attempt to draw those who read secret histories to the text.

Secret history became particularly prominent through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.58 Nicola Parsons summarises secret history as ‘a category of historiography’ that ‘provides a means of radically supplementing the orderly, public narrative of history by cataloguing, in Ephraim Chambers’ contemporary definition, “this not yet known, or hitherto kept secret”’.59 Secret histories claimed to reveal the hidden activities of those in power. They used allusion to reveal private lives. Brian Cowan summarises the key characteristics of secret histories:

They claim to reveal secrets; they are iconoclastic; they privilege marginalised perspectives; they engage with the concept of secrecy in a highly self-conscious manner; they are interested in “fragmentary forms of documentation”, especially anecdotes, and are acutely aware of the various forms of mediation extant in modern society [...] and they developed at the intersection of “non-literary” and “literary” styles of writing.60

The latter is true of the General History – indeed, it is a topic this introduction discusses. The text also shows an interest in documentation. However, the text as a whole does not conform to these conventions. Further, as Mayer evidences, the intersection of ‘fiction’ and ‘fact’ – what Cowan calls ‘literary’ and ‘non-literary’ – is not exclusive to secret histories. Rather, it is a convention of many seventeenth and eighteenth-century works that claim the title of ‘history’. Crucially, the General History does not claim to reveal secrets about those in power,

60 Cowan, p. 133.
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nor does it appear to be about the Georgian court. It does not ask the reader to ‘compare the version of events that we think we know with the new one that it offers’. Instead, the text argues that it presents new information, not an alternative perspective. It does not come with any kind of key that explains which character represented which public figure, nor is there evidence that a key was published. The person mentioned in this letter may have been better at making these identifications than is possible due to our distance from early eighteenth-century society; however, this letter seems to me to be an attempt to appeal to readers who were interested in the secrets of the Whig court. Having acknowledged that secret history was a prominent genre in the early eighteenth century, and recognised that the General History was attached to it in a small way, I nevertheless argue that this text is not a secret history, and put this particular genre of history aside.

Many eighteenth-century texts intermingle fact and fiction. Mayer extensively examines the relationship between fact and fiction in history writing, arguing that:

a commitment to the reporting of matters of fact coexisted with a willingness to tolerate or even actively employ fictional elements in history and also with a markedly polemical rhetoric that signalled that history was not a disinterested factual discourse but a means of shaping historical reality.

He argues that ‘fact’ was an unstable category, even in accounts that used documentary material, because ‘many different kinds of “facts”, [...] some of which were dubious in respect to both provenance and facticity, were deployed’ (p. 21). Furthermore, Mayer suggests that ‘from Sidney onward into the eighteenth century, claims for the marriage rather than the divorce of history and fiction were a constant feature of the self-presentation of fiction in England’ (p. 146). Placing ideas of ‘self-presentation’ alongside the notion that texts deployed ‘many different kinds of facts’ suggests that claims of veracity were often performative and rhetorical in this period. Mayer’s reading of the relationship between fiction and history suggests that the performance of veracity was a form of literary expression that appeared across different types of writing in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Leonard Davis demonstrates how other genres deployed nuanced approaches to notions of fact and fiction. The idea that ‘genres were not defined by their allegiance to truth telling or invention’ is key to his account of how the novel developed. Davis suggests that between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries prose narratives existed in a news/novels discourse that

62 Keys were sometimes published separately to avoid accusations of libel.
63 Mayer, p. 11.
included history, fictional narratives, and the earliest iterations of journalism (p. 67). He argues that ‘the news/novels discourse seems to make no real distinction between what we would call fact and fiction’ (p. 51). Printed narratives were characterised by an ambivalent attitude towards whether content was factual or fictional, even though there were ‘criteria for fact or fiction’ in this period (p. 67). Additionally, according to Davis, the use of the word ‘trewe’ was equally ambiguous in early printed ballads. He suggests that ‘ballad writers spent a good deal of effort trying to document and prove that their stories were indeed verifiably true’ (p. 52 – 53). Thus, the claims that we see in the General History were preceded by very similar protestations in other early texts. Davis suggests that early modern audiences were discerning readers who ‘knew that their newes was not trewe’ but ‘did not think that fact very significant’ (p. 54). In Davis’ understanding readers and writers had concrete and developed notions of what fact and fiction were; however, these ideas did not affect their consideration of genre. According to Davis ‘the news/novels discourse is a kind of undifferentiated matrix out of which journalism will be distinguished from novels’ (p. 67). Consequently, factual narratives become ‘clearly differentiated from fictional ones’ through the eighteenth century (p. 67). However, Mayer and McKeon have both critiqued Davis for his lack of attention to the genre of history. Mayer asserts that ‘Davis’s insightful argument is weakened, however, by his concentration on the “news/novels discourse” [...] rather than “history”, the factual discourse with which early modern fiction writers repeatedly linked the new form they were essaying’. McKeon similarly argues that ‘nonjournalistic instances of prose narrative (like histories) that also evince a characteristically undiscriminating attitude toward fact and fiction must become, despite this attitude, invisible, mysteriously excluded from the crucial “ensemble of written texts” in Davis’s approach’. My reading of the General History engages with the complexity that McKeon and Mayer criticise Davis for not being alert to.

Loveman, meanwhile, argues that Davis’s work ‘neglects [readers] who were neither credulous, indifferent, nor [...] particularly troubled when faced with ambiguous truth claims’. She suggests eighteenth-century readers were alert to the complex nature of fact and fiction in the literature they consumed, even in works published as ‘histories’, and those that claimed to be true. She argues that contemporary ‘social, political and religious conditions’ ‘leant prestige to a wary, even suspicious approach to texts’ (p. 16). Her analysis suggests that eighteenth-century writers produced texts in an environment where readers would deploy what she calls ‘sceptical reading’ (p. 20). This created a kind of circuit where

65 Mayer, p. 12.
67 Loveman, p. 7.
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readers approached texts by reading sceptically, while writers actively invited readers to be discerning as they read by deploying rhetorical tropes. Readers and writers therefore engaged with ideas of veracity when producing and consuming texts.

Loveman describes early eighteenth-century readers as sophisticated and discerning: ‘it was a readers first responsibility to discern the truth-status of a work, therefore avoiding shameful misapprehensions and lessening the risk of being deceived’ (p. 20). She suggests that the discerning reader had a sophisticated relationship to ideas of veracity. They did not expect the representation of an accurate record of events to be the only truth a text could provide, nor were they sifting fact from fiction in texts, although Loveman emphasises that it was important for readers to not be duped by a text perpetrating a ‘sham’. Instead, readers looked for different kinds of truths in all kinds of texts. Loveman suggests that ‘informed reading involved weighing explicit truth-claims in purportedly factual narratives, but also searching for concealed truths in ostensibly fictional stories’ (p. 40). The genre of secret history, for example, offered readers the opportunity to do the latter.

The General History was produced in a context where, according to Loveman, ‘there was widespread agreement that it was the reader’s responsibility to establish the credibility of a piece, discern hidden agendas and be alert to authorial roguery’ (p. 45). As a result:

we need to reconsider what readers understood an author to be implying when he stated that his fiction was ‘true’ relation. This needs not be a call for readers to credit the work or to suspend their disbelief; instead it could serve as a signal for readers to demonstrate their superior interpretive skills by going out and investigating the origins and contents of a story. (p. 46)

Approaching the General History with this in mind does not resolve the question of whether it can or should be approached as a reliable history, but instead provides an alternative frame within which to view it. By approaching truth claims as a gambit that invited readers to investigate the contents we are reminded that the text was presented to a knowing reader acclimated to these kinds of claims in print. We get a sense of this sophisticated readership by acknowledging the landscape of contemporary texts, like Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver’s Travels, that also claimed to be truthful, but that are recognised by both eighteenth-century and modern readers as works of fiction. The eighteenth-century reader agilely read on different registers within a cultural context that encouraged written works to deploy different types of veracity.

The General History’s prefatory claims, then, could mean a number of things. They could signal that the content was probable, that it was morally accurate, or that is represented how things could be. Alternatively, it may have invited the reader to question and investigate these claims. Mayer’s research underlines how contemporary history accommodated fictional material in this period, which suggests that we could take the claims of accuracy exactly at
face value. Outlining these different approaches to the prefatory claims demonstrates that the *General History* invites different and varied modes of reading. This account signals the importance of reading a text like the *General History* with an awareness of both the contemporary resonances of key terms, and an understanding of the sophisticated cultures of reading it was produced in, where readers had nuanced understandings of ideas of fact, fiction, history, and truthfulness. However, there is a twentieth and twenty-first century culture of reading the *General History* as an archive that does not account for these facets of the text’s publishing history. Turning to the *General History* as a repository of facts is a singular approach to this text that does not account for the text’s own invitation to read for different kinds of truth. It also fails to recognise the sophisticated reader the *General History* was addressing, and how the text was fully embedded within a particular literary culture.

IV. **Modern historiography of eighteenth-century piracy**

Popular histories of piracy written for non-expert audiences have been particularly influenced by the character and content of the *General History*. These works often use it as an archive for what they present as factually accurate history. Selected popular histories, like the works of Angus Konstam, rephrase sections with little information about the source of the material. These books therefore re-present the *General History* whilst stripping away material that signals the text’s nuanced engagement with ideas of truth, fact, and fiction.

Konstam particularly relies on the *General History* in his accounts of the pirates of the ‘golden age’. He has written a number of popular histories and positions himself as ‘one of the world’s leading authorities on pirates’.\(^6^8\) His survey of pirate history, *Pirates: The Complete History from 1300 BC to the Present Day* (2008), relies almost exclusively upon the *General History* in the chapter about the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-centuries. This chapter includes a limited number of references as it only cites the sources of selected quotations. These references are drawn from the *General History*, David Cordingly’s work, and Konstam’s own biography of Blackbeard.\(^6^9\) However, he draws upon the *General History* far more than his footnotes suggest. Konstam paraphrases the text throughout this chapter, intermittently prefacing the material with comments like ‘according to Johnson’ and ‘Johnson claims.’\(^7^0\) He also does not provide page references for a number of direct quotations. These approaches

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\(^6^8\) According to Konstam’s website, his books on piracy have sold over 120,000 copies. His self-positioning and sales justify my focus on him. (Angus Konstam, ‘About’ on Angus Konstam [online] updated: 7 February 2018 [accessed 4 August 2020] Available from <http://www.anguskonstam.com/about.html>.)


\(^7^0\) Konstam, *Pirates: The Complete History from 1300 BC to the Present Day*, p. 189, 201.
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obscure the prominence of the *General History* in his history of piracy, which impedes readers who wish to interrogate his interpretations. These devices thus present the contents of the *General History* as reality. In this book, which claims to separate myth from fact, the reader is presented with a mixture of the verifiable and the invented, much in the mode of ‘Baconian historiography’ discussed earlier.

Konstam’s biography of Blackbeard, *Blackbeard: America’s Most Notorious Pirate* (2006), similarly takes the *General History* as a factual account. It approaches the Blackbeard chapter from second octavo as the basic story of Blackbeard’s life and fills gaps by turning to other sources. Again, this approach mixes the verifiable with the embellished account presented by the *General History*. Across these two books Konstam unconsciously mimics the character of the *General History*. This approach simultaneously reproduces the text and demonstrates the appeal of this particular kind of history for those who are unused to a mode of history that allows for the inclusion of the invented.

Konstam’s work is part of a pattern of historiography inaugurated by one of the earliest twentieth-century historians of piracy, Philip Gosse. Gosse’s pirate works earned him ‘an international reputation’ in the 1920’s and 30’s as they were translated into French, Spanish, and Dutch. His work continues to influence modern historiographies and literary accounts. His oeuvre includes an edition of the *General History*, published in 1925, and two works that draw upon it; a collection of biographies published as *The Pirate’s Who’s Who: Giving the Particulars of the Lives and Deaths of the Pirates and Buccaneers* (1924) and his *History of Piracy* (1932). These works demonstrate how Gosse used the *General History* as a source, an approach that continues to be replicated in modern historiography.

Gosse’s belief that the *General History* is a reputable source of factual information underpins much of his work. The preface to his edition discusses how:

Not a long while ago it was the custom to smile indulgently at Johnson’s History as being a mixture of fact and fancy, but from time to time old documents have been rescued from some dusty nook of oblivion which have proved his good faith. Many of the incidents hitherto looked upon as imaginary are found all to be absolutely accurate both in date and circumstance.

*The History of Piracy* similarly asserts:

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73 Marcus Rediker, Grace Moore, Mel Campbell, and Carol Senf cite Gosse, amongst others.
It used to be said that [Johnson's] history was made up more of fairy tales than fact, but of late years evidence has proved Johnson to be accurate, and there is no doubt that he is on the whole to be believed.\textsuperscript{75}

It is difficult to assess Gosse's assertion that his predecessors approached the text as 'a mixture of fact and fancy' or as 'more fairy tales than fact' without examining nineteenth- and early twentieth-century responses. However, it is enough for my purpose to recognise that Gosse positioned his work in opposition to this kind of approach. He takes the line that Johnson 'is on the whole to be believed'. While we cannot be certain that Gosse began the trend of treating the General History as a source, his approach certainly influenced those that followed.

Additionally, I argue that Gosse advanced the trend of repacking parts without any reference to the text. The Pirate's Who's Who in particular summarises content from a collection of unnamed sources to create unreferenced biographies. The inclusion of the invented Captain Misson verifies that Gosse drew upon the General History.\textsuperscript{76} His History of Piracy similarly uses information garnered from the General History when discussing eighteenth-century piracy. He argues there is a clear correspondence between the twentieth-century imagination of the eighteenth-century pirate and actual eighteenth-century pirates. Gosse's conclusion seems inevitable when one recognises that the General History not only influenced Gosse's account of the reality of eighteenth century piracy, but also has influenced twentieth-century perceptions of the pirate. Moreover, Gosse replicates its tone and character. His summaries of Avery, Kidd, Roberts, and Misson use language that is reminiscent of the General History's rhetorical flourishes. Gosse's work demonstrates how the text's protestations and tone are pervasive and convincing. Most importantly, Gosse progressed a trend in historiography that paraphrases and removes the General History's paratext, thereby presenting it as uncomplicated history. Writers like Konstam later adopted and advanced this approach. Therefore, I suggest that certain modern histories of piracy can be seen as new iterations of the General History.

Even scholarship that is alert to the interplay of fact and fiction in the General History can turn to the text as if it were an archive. Joel Baer and David Cordingly are both careful to signal the text's unreliability, yet continue to use it as a source, albeit with qualification. This suggests that the text's character tempts even those who are aware of its complicated representation of the verifiable and the invented.

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Baer’s *Pirates* references the *General History* as he argues that late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century pirates prospered because colonial legal systems were inconsistent. He comments that Johnson ‘brings the story of the pirates to life as few others have done, but often at the expense of historical truth’ (p. 27). As a consequence, he had a ‘long struggle of conscience’ over using it (p. 27). However, he argues that it is ‘morally impossible not to borrow from Johnson’ even as he recognises it is problematic to use the text as a source (p. 27). Here Baer falls for the text’s most seductive feature: it represents itself as the only material that can fill gaps in the historical record, offering concrete information in the place of suppositions and possibilities. Baer demonstrates his reservations by commenting that ‘I have therefore taken pains to identify all citations from the *General History* so that readers may, if they will, take the passages with a grain of sea salt’ (p. 27). Yet, while Baer is scrupulous in providing attributions, he nevertheless embeds its content into his accounts of Blackbeard and Roberts. He uses phrases like ‘here is Charles Johnson’s sensational description’ to introduce quotations that are left uncorroborated, drawing conclusions from the material (p. 170). Thus, he continues to treat the text as a plausible source of factual biography, putting the onus on the reader to assess this information and his conclusions.

Cordingly takes a similar approach. *Under the Black Flag: the Romance and Reality of Life Among the Pirates* (2006) aims to distinguish between fact and fiction by examining how current perceptions compare to ‘the real world of pirates’. He takes a thematic approach to discern fact from myth; analysing the use of flags, deployment of torture, treasure and plunder, establishment of illicit communities, trials and executions, and female pirates. Even so, he uses the *General History* with qualification where there is no alternative. Like Baer, Cordingly often moderates information with comments like ‘there are no accounts in official records, but a close reading of Johnson’s *General History of the Pyrates* suggests’, and uses the phrase ‘according to Johnson’s *General History*’ frequently. These comments are methodological reservations that allow scholars to use the text critically. Nonetheless, they continue to use the text to fill in gaps, which in some ways legitimate the use of it as archive.

Other histories of piracy, meanwhile, argue that the *General History* is a reliable source. Rediker extensively cites the *General History* alongside other sources in his argument that pirates were radical and proto-socialist. He justifies his use by arguing that its authority has been established. An endnote in *Villains of all Nations* (2012) comments: ‘It should be noted that Johnson is widely regarded as a highly reliable source for factual information (apart from

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77 Baer, *Pirates*.
79 Cordingly, pp. 150, 159.
one fictional chapter, on Captain Misson'). Similarly, his other books point to scholarship published before 1990 to establish a general consensus on reliability. Amongst these are Gosse's History of Piracy, Manual Schonhorn's introduction to the text, and Hugh Rankin's The Golden Age of Piracy. Rankin comments:

[Johnson's] account has provided the framework for every book on piracy since the date of its publication. Johnson must have had some access to official correspondence of the day, for much of the information, even conversation, is corroborated in both personal correspondence and official dispatchers [...] his History of the Pyrates must be considered as a basic work.

Rankin gestures to correspondence and documentation, but gives little other evidence to support its reliability.

Rediker rarely explicitly mentions the General History, yet it is woven throughout his work. Outlaws of the Atlantic (2014) mentions that it was included in Henry K Brooke's The Book of Pirates (1841), while Villains of all Nations names it when it discusses female pirates and performance aboard pirate ships. It is the only source for his argument that Thomas Anstis's crew performed plays: 'News of the play eventually made its way from the Caribbean to London, to Captain Charles Johnson, who would include it in A General History of the Pyrates'. He justifies his analysis by commenting: 'Johnson, who is widely regarded as a reliable chronicler, insisted on the authenticity of the play'. Rediker insists that the General History should be treated as a reliable source of historical information, but pays little attention to its hybrid nature, or publishing contexts. Consequently, I approach Rediker's proto-socialist interpretation of the text as a reading of the General History in this thesis.

A number of scholars do, however, acknowledge the problems associated with using the General History as a source. Mark Hanna recognises that 'an educated, English-speaking readership would have been aware of the blurring of fact and fiction in genres claiming to be true histories'. He argues that 'the General History would have borne out their wariness because it is part documentary bolstered by biographical fantasy, heavily edited and often rehashed from newspaper accounts' (p. 399). He further argues that:

although the General History has been understood to be giving pirates a voice, it did the opposite. Johnson took the factual fragments about pirates (from newspapers,
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...trial records and dying speeches) and then recast the rest to suit his own purpose. Johnson’s tales confronted readers who might have actively supported pirates in the past or who has been enthralled by mythic tales. (p. 406)

Hanna contends that the General History appropriates the voice of the pirate to present an ironic representation of their apparent egalitarianism. He argues that the text aims to correct romantic assumptions about the figure generated by earlier tales. This approach reads the representation of homosocial order as a criticism, and the protestations of the sailors’ poor circumstances as the justifications of unreliable criminal figures. Furthermore he argues ‘it is important to take the lofty speeches and witty dialogues of Johnson’s pirates with a grain of salt’ (p. 402). Hanna suggests that we should read irony in every speech and proclamation in the General History.

With a greater alertness to the mixture of fiction and historiography in the General History, Arne Bialuschewski recognises that there are substantial differences between editions. He compares some of the differences between the first and second octavos’ version of the Blackbeard chapter with other historical sources to ‘identify the roots of Blackbeard’s legend’.87 Bialuschewski identifies episodes that are not corroborated by other material as likely fictional, to assert that the General History is unreliable as a historical source. His comparison underlines that the information presented in multiple editions does not align with other historical records. Bialuschewski privileges the material that can be corroborated, as he describes the different images of Blackbeard as myth.

Recognising the historical use of the General History is important in understanding the afterlife of the text. The General History has evolved beyond the confines of the book itself. It has been embedded into many modern historiographies of eighteenth-century piracy; therefore, some historiographies can be considered partial transformations of the General History. These transformations embed the text into broader histories of piracy without the relevant paratextual cues. Other historiographies are more alert to the complexities of this literary text; yet use methodological reservations to permit its inclusion within their ‘story’ of piracy. However, developing a greater understanding of the early life of the General History recuperates this as a sophisticated literary text.

V. My approach to the General History

This thesis analyses the figure of the pirate generated by editions of the General History published in the first ten years of its life. I do not seek to discern the invented from verifiable,

but rather to examine the images and representations of pirates in this text. I compare a number of editions published between 1724 and 1734, identifying numerous changes in form, language, content, and illustration. I track the impact of these changes on the *General History* as a narrative tradition, exceeding extant approaches to it as a singular text. In particular, I compare the language used across editions to examine how the pirate is used to explore ideas of fellowship and captaincy.

I also identify how later editions within this ten-year period embed the text’s pirate narratives within a collection of criminal lives. This allows me to compare the pirate as imagined in this text to the highwayman, a contemporary analogue that appears in cognate and contiguous texts. In doing so I question what makes the pirate of this text a unique literary figure. I argue that the pirate is significant, precisely because in some ways s/he is a literary criminal, but in others is also something different. This figure contributes to ideas of criminality, yet also speaks to other concerns of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

I approach the *General History* as both emerging from the seventeenth century and within the early eighteenth century. Considering the text within these two chronological frames allows me to understand it as both a continuation of earlier outlaw, adventure, and exploration narratives, as well as a sophisticated fictional response to emerging cultures of commerce. I argue that the text imagines the pirate as a new form of adventurer, for whom commercial venture is a central value. It represents the protagonists of a modernising age as an evolution of the chivalric ideas associated with adventure.

This thesis begins by examining the early life of the *General History*, placing it within the literary context of the eighteenth-century book market. The first chapter establishes that it was a much-manipulated text by outlining the numerous differences in content, language, form, and illustration between editions published between 1724 and 1734. I suggest that these differences mean that we should approach the *General History* as an unfixed narrative tradition, rather than a single book.

The second and third chapters then turn to key differences in language and plot. They use selected examples to highlight how the pirate is similar to contemporary and antecedent rogue figures, and how s/he differs. They establish that the figure of the pirate is imagined through the representation of the crew and the construction of the captain.

Chapter two examines the representation of homosociality and communality within and between pirate companies. I argue that the pirates of the *General History* are fellows, and that piracy is a fellowship. One chapter of the text acts as a model for fellowship, which develops
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notions introduced in the formation of fellowship. These representations imagine fellowship rooted in the idea that the oaths of outlaws have value. Comparing editions shows a variation in the profile of fellowship across this ten-year period.

Chapter three focuses on the representation of captaincy. I explore the depiction of pirates as protagonists through the focal captains and examine a number of modalities of captaincy. As a result, I argue that the pirate captain is a form of the hero imagined in adventure narratives. The pirate is also offered as an imagination of the merchant venturer taken to its most logical extension. Emerging ideas of commercial venture therefore influence this new figure.

Together these chapters allow me to reach towards a conclusion that engages with the literary pre-histories and multiple contexts of the General History, that is alert to the complexities of character and tone, and that actively interrogates the multiple variations of this text across this ten-year period.
Chapter 1  The Publishing History of the General History, 1724 - 1734

1.1  Modern editions

1.1.1  Modern editions heavily influence interpretations

Most scholarly engagements with the General History read the text via a modern edition. In recent years digitisation projects have made electronic versions of early editions freely accessible.¹ Further digital editions are available via a subscription to JISC Historic texts.² However, modern editions, like Manuel Schönhorn’s 1972 publication and David Cordingly’s 1998 edition, are more frequently cited. This is not to say that early editions are ignored, but I argue that modern editions dominate scholarship.³ These modern editions influence interpretations of the text.

Modern editions are not replicas of early modern books. Instead, they are a particular response to a text. New editions of non-canonical texts often aim to aid accessibility, both in terms of physical access and readability. These editions afford readers the opportunity to engage with material that might otherwise only accessible in a limited number of archives. They also render a text more readable by modern standards by updating format and typeface, and by standardising spelling.⁴ Modern editions are mediations that aim to give a sense of the early modern reading experience, but that also wish to enable easy engagement with the material.

¹ Project Gutenberg provides a full text version of the second octavo, Google Books hosts the British Library’s 1729 abridgement, while East Carolina University Digital Collections has digitised both the second octavo and the second volume.
² JISC Historic Texts brings together EEBO, ECCO, selected items from the British Library’s 19th Century Collection, and the UK Medical Heritage Library.
⁴ Early eighteenth-century spelling was fluid, often determined by the space a compositor had on a line. They contracted words to avoid running over two lines, or added letters to bulk out a line. (Ronald B McKerrow, An Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students, ed. by Oak Knoll Press (New Castle, 1994), pp. 11, 246–47.)
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Modernisation, then, makes changes to suit the needs of a current audience. John Feather suggests that literary scholars should actively question whether modernisation affects how we interpret early modern texts:

> Whether the appearance of the modern edition on clean white paper in neatly photo set typography affects our readings of [Paradise Lost] is a question for the literary critic to answer; indeed, it would be agreeable if the question were even to be asked.\(^5\)

Modern editions alter the reading experience in a number of ways. Multiple volumes are often bound together, which means that readers no longer experience a break in the narrative occasioned by closing one book and opening another. They alter page setting and size, which can amend the placement of imagery in relation to words. Moreover, in fulfilling the aim of rendering a text more accessible, modern editions often dilute many of the cues that remind readers that a text is the product of a specific cultural and historical moment. The visual cues embedded in eighteenth-century books that might alert readers to its popular status, like poor paper quality, size, or hasty composition, are sanitised. In the case of the General History in particular, modern editions create a veneer of respectability, thereby acting to affirm the text's claims to authenticity and reliability.

The impact of modernisation extends beyond physical changes to format. Paratext often changes the most. Editors must choose whether to include contemporary or new illustrations, or none at all. They must decide between typing the frontispiece and including a facsimile. Modern scholarly editions in particular frequently add paratextual materials to aid the reader. They might include prefatory commentaries, author biographies, or timelines of relevant events of the period. These paratextual materials are a response to the text bound into the book itself. They suggest contexts and ideas to keep in mind whilst reading. In addition, commentaries or introductions frequently offer interpretations that a reader might consume before they begin the text itself. This is not noted to make any judgements about this process, but to observe that modern editions are mediated, and that this should be recognised when they are used.

Mediation extends beyond the paratext. The edited text is also layered with choices that affect interpretation. Editors usually choose to work with one edition in cases where multiple iterations have been published. This unavoidably excludes elements from other editions, which is a particular problem in modern editions of the General History. As I later describe in detail, editions vary in content, form, and structure. Therefore, any modern edition invariably excludes material.

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Digitised editions of eighteenth-century books are also mediated. Kathryn Stasio relates Diana Kichuk’s questions about digitisation:

Most of us will rely heavily on scanned texts, so we must ask ourselves important questions along the way. Diana Kichuk has done so: 'Is the scholar examining the work itself – the Early English Book or broadside in the case of EEBO – as vendors and many eminent scholars claim? Is it a faithful copy of the text and the physical object? Alternatively, does the process of digitisation transform the original work into a virtual artefact with an ersatz resemblance to an original?'

We should ask these questions of all digitised material, as they allow us to interrogate the effect of reading a text on a screen, divorced from the physical cues that are significant to the early eighteenth-century book as a material object. Stasio comments that 'Kichuk, among others, argues that EEBO has produced entirely new texts through the process of digitisation, meaning scholars must be cognisant that they are not looking at the originals but at low resolution copies' (p. 104). Digitised editions come in a variety of forms: transcribed plain text, encoded transcriptions, and images of the pages. Transcriptions particularly raise many of the same questions as modern editions. Who transcribed the text? What choices did they make while transcribing? Was readability their priority? Similarly, images or captures of each page may have issues of readability or errors in coding. These issues are not exclusive to digitised texts, as Stasio acknowledges: 'this is not a new problem, as Kichuk states, since microfilm brought with it many of the same issues as a democratising tool that potentially undercut good research’ (p. 105). Attempts to widen access to rare texts come with potential problems. For example, Stasio addresses the potential shortcomings of open access digitisation projects like Project Gutenberg:

the creator of that website very honestly and rather proudly warns scholars against using the site, noting 'Project Gutenberg has avoided requests, demands and pressures to create “authoritative editions”, we do not write for the reader who cares whether a certain phrase in Shakespeare has a “:” or a “;” between its clauses.’ (p. 113)

We should keep this in mind when using these resources. Digitised editions are useful tools for those who have limited access to physical copies. I mention these potential problems not to argue against using digitised editions, but rather to suggest that they should be used with an awareness of their limitations. We are not looking at the early eighteenth-century book, but rather a copy of it. We should also recognise that digitised editions are a version of a single copy of a single edition.


7 For example, turning to a new page on JISC Historical Texts can cause the website to redirect to the first page, preventing the reader from viewing certain parts.
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Many authors who engage with the *General History* use Manuel Schonhorn’s edition, published in 1972 and updated in 1999. This book can be seen as a fusion of the octavo editions. Schonhorn describes it as a reprint of the fourth edition that includes certain elements of the first, second, and third (p. xlii). He claims to have used language from the first edition in places where there are ‘substantive’ sentence-level changes, but content from the fourth edition when larger sections differ (p. xlii). Thus, Schonhorn’s editorial decisions influence readings, because there are points where sentence-level changes can lead to different interpretations, as this thesis later explores.

Schonhorn also makes structural changes that could influence readings of the text. He splits the appendix and affixes each section to the relevant chapter of the first volume. Thus, almost a third of the second volume is inserted into the first, removing the reading distance between the end of the individual narratives and the appendix sections, some of which revise the material included in the original chapters. Therefore, rather than absorbing a narrative and then discovering a contradictory account in the second volume, the reader is immediately presented with ‘new’ information. This approach removes the most obvious marker that the *General History* evolved between editions. He also reorders the remaining material ‘according to a general chronological frame, preserving the continuity in what is considered the most important and sustained segment of the work, the history of English pirates in Madagascar’ (p. xlii). Schonhorn does not identify who considers this section to be ‘the most important’ part, instead gesturing to a nebulous consensus. In privileging one section above others Schonhorn prejudices a reader’s approach. Overall, by imposing a chronological sequence Schonhorn remakes the form of the *General History*. His approach diminishes the text’s identity as a complete work by suggesting that its value lies in individual biographies. And yet, in many ways Schonhorn is also true to the character of the text as it developed in the first ten years precisely because he edits it to suit his readers. His approach is entirely consonant with the *General History* as a text comprised of multiple iterations.

Schonhorn’s paratext has perhaps the biggest influence upon readers. The paratextual materials present the text as ‘Daniel Defoe’s *General History*’, an attribution I explore later in this chapter. For now, I note that Defoe’s name replaces ‘Captain Charles Johnson’ on the front cover, while the bulk of the prefatory material connect Defoe to the text’s themes. The preface includes biography and a description of Defoe’s connections to the maritime sphere, which highlight his associations with sailing and sailors. Schonhorn also posits an acquaintance between Defoe and Captain Woodes Rogers. The introduction also includes a brief history of

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piracy and a short discussion of potential sources. The 1999 re-issue responds to criticism of the attribution by commenting ‘the present editor generally agrees with Moore’s findings’, although it does concede that Defoe’s authorship ‘is yet to be convincingly proven’ (p. 710 – 711). Schonhorn comprehensively frames the text as ‘Defoe’s General History’, making authorship a central theme.

Cordingly takes a different approach in producing a modern edition, by further modernising an already edited iteration. Cordingly’s primary text is Gosse’s 1925 version of the 1725 edition. Gosse’s edition replaces the original preface and introduction with a new preface, and adds a collection of illustrations by Alexina Ogilvie. In turn, Cordingly uses Gosse’s edition, including the illustrations, but adds the original 1725 introduction (but not the original preface) and inserts a chapter about Captain Kidd, found in the second volume.

Cordingly’s Conway Maritime Press publication (1998) follows many of the conventions designed to remove distance between reader and text. It uses modern paper and type, and follows the logic that ‘if Johnson had been writing today he would not have used capital letters for every noun’.⁹ His Lyons Press edition (2010), however, takes a different approach. It uses a handwritten font for chapter titles, and lines the outer edges of the pages with a border that resembles torn paper placed atop a nautical map.¹⁰ This moderates the eighteenth-century form, whilst also foregrounding the age and maritime focus. The edition attempts to tap into a modern fascination with the aesthetics of old things, whilst maintaining readability.

Modern editions of the General History are re-presentations, not facsimiles. Like the histories of piracy explored in the introduction, these editions are mediations of the General History designed to engage a specific audience. In one sense, this makes them authentic: the act of changing and revising the text is consonant with its character as it developed in the early eighteenth-century. As this chapter demonstrates, the General History is not a fixed text. Modern editions thus represent a further evolution of a complex and knotty narrative tradition that developed between 1724 and 1734.

1.1.2 Use of modern editions occludes the early life of the General History

Modern editions occlude the complexity of the text’s early life. They smooth out contradictions and changes between editions as they attempt to produce a definitive text.

¹⁰ Captain Charles Johnson, A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates, ed. by David Cordingly (Guilford, CT: Lyons Press, 2010).
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They also allow scholars to engage with early editions through short publishing histories. Scholarship often introduces the text by specifying dates and summarising the debate about authorship, before turning to their primary concerns. For example, Rennie introduces the text by commenting: ‘Earlier in 1724, some months before A New Voyage, there appeared (with corrections and additions that same year and in 1725 and 1726) A General History’.\(^{11}\) However, these overviews are rarely comprehensive. Some use inaccurate dates or the wrong numbers for editions, while others do not mention abridgements. Publishing details are instead used to evidence the text’s impact in its contemporary moment. Cordingly’s introduction is typical: ‘The first edition was published on May 14, 1724, and was so popular that other editions followed in rapid succession’.\(^{12}\) Acknowledgements like this are primarily used to argue that the text had a large contemporary audience; Cordingly conflates the number of editions with popularity. There are few engagements with the early life of General History that extend beyond such summary assumptions. Few works grapple with the difficulty of choosing a single eighteenth-century edition, and what might be excluded from their account of the General History in doing so. Modern editions are an accessible method by which scholars can choose not to make these choices, which is understandable as their work has different concerns.

This is not to say that the early life of the General History has been wholly unexplored. Gosse significantly contributes to our knowledge through his 1927 publication, Bibliography of the Works of Captain Charles Johnson. This bibliography describes the physical properties of sixty-eight works published under Johnson’s name between 1724 and 1927. It includes transcriptions of title pages, and information about size, signatures, pagination, and printing errors. Gosse’s bibliography identifies key details about nine editions published 1724 to 1734, including three translations, which makes it a useful starting point for establishing the early life of the General History.

A more recent publication identifies further details about the publication of the General History as it posits a potential author. Arne Bialuschewski’s article, ‘Daniel Defoe, Nathaniel Mist, and the “General History of the Pyrates”’ (2004), details parts of the publishing history while arguing that Mist contributed to the production of the General History.\(^{13}\) Bialuschewski aligns specific publication details and advertisements for octavo editions with Mist’s biography, placing the information alongside documentary evidence. The article does not consider abridgements, serialisations, or pirate copies published in this period because they

\(^{11}\) Rennie, p. 37.
\(^{12}\) Cordingly, p. xix.
are not relevant to its purpose. Consequently, his article has useful detail, but does not extend beyond the editions than can be connected to Mist.

The majority of those who examine the text do not exhibit an awareness of the differences between early editions, precisely because they are smoothed out by the methods used in producing a modern, authoritative edition. However, Bialuschewski and Rennie have compared specific chapters across editions. Bialuschewski interrogates the differences between iterations of the Blackbeard chapter found in the first and second octavo editions as he interrogates the life of the historical man nicknamed Blackbeard. Rennie similarly focuses on the differences in the Gow chapter found in the third and fourth octavo editions. There has yet to be a comprehensive study that spans multiple chapters of the early editions of the General History.

1.2 Publishing history affects how we read the text

My account of the General History’s early life, with a particular focus on its publishing history, charts a transformation of the text. The General History begins as a cohesive collection of interconnected narratives, and transitions into a sprawling compendium of tales through a series of additions, amendments, abridgements, and other changes in form. I suggest that we should therefore think of A General History of the Pyrates as a narrative tradition, rather than a singular book. By narrative tradition I mean a changeable and changing collection of stories that are bound together by a common theme. Crucially, this narrative tradition is unfixed. Certain narratives about particular pirates form the core, but the content of these accounts is malleable, and other narratives can be added or removed. The variability of editions published between 1724 and 1734 demonstrates that there is no one, authoritative edition of the General History. We should instead think of the ‘text’ of the General History as a series of versions. Significantly, I argue that close comparison of these editions can enhance our understanding of the meaning and significance of the literary pirate of the early eighteenth century.

In extensively examining the early life of the General History we find a plurality of forms. Few contemporary narratives were disseminated this variously or extensively. As the rest of this chapter details, the General History was abridged, translated, serialised, and pirated, in addition to its publication in octavo. Therefore this text’s publishing history provides a particularly rich microcosm of the early eighteenth-century book trade.

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Establishing a comprehensive account of the publishing history affects how we approach and read the *General History*. Recognising that a number of editions were published alongside those generally referenced (namely the octavo publications) refines commentaries on the text's contemporary popularity. Other editions threatened the octavo publications across this ten-year period; the first octavo edition was undercut by periodical serialisations, while the third octavo edition may have been challenged by abridgements. The quick proliferation of editions may therefore have been a response to publication in other forms, rather than a clear indication that lots of people wanted to buy the *General History*. Changing the text in the octavo editions may have been how the copyholder attempted to stay ahead of this competition and convince readers to buy his 'authorised' version.

Crucially, tracing the publishing history exposes a process of assimilation, whereby successive editions of the *General History* were reconfigured to resemble criminal biographies. Cheaper abridgements and serialisations were the most popular editions because they targeted bigger, less exclusive audiences. Midwinter’s abridgement went through four editions, while sheets were left over from the third octavo in 1734. Similarly, after 1734 the only reprinted versions were the abridgements and compendium, which promote it as a collection of criminal narratives. In an inverse progression to many criminal biographies, this text moved from more expensive to cheaper formats. To survive in a competitive marketplace it had to lose, or at least subdue, some of the characteristics that made it a curiously hybrid work, including the preface and introduction. Only when it fully resembles a criminal biography does it sell in folio, and even that edition is produced from the remainders of one of the cheapest formats, the fascicle.

1.3 Octavos

1.3.1 Initial publication in octavo

Between 1724 and 1734 the *General History* was printed as a number of monographs and as a two-volume edition, as well as appearing in serials, abridgements, translations, and compendia. Gosse suggests that the *General History* may have been first published in America in 1723, which, if corroborated, would place the text in a strikingly different set of publishing contexts. Gosse quotes *The History of Printing in America* by Isaiah Thomas:

> 1723. Johnson: Capt. Charles. Gen. Hist of Pyrates from their first rise and settlement in the Island of Providence to the present time, etc. NEW YORK. Printed by Wm. Bradford. 1723.16

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Thomas’s 1874 book includes two entries for this Bradford publication – the first in 1723, with a second in 1724.17 William Bradford first established a press in New York in 1693, and was still publishing in the 1710-1720's.18 It is therefore plausible that Bradford could have published an edition in 1723. However, like Gosse, who laments his inability to locate this edition, I have been unable to find any copies.19 Bradford’s second edition is advertised in 1724; however, I have been unable to find any contemporary references to a 1723 edition published in New York.20 Therefore, in the absence of any other evidence, my publishing history must begin with the first London publication.21

A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the most notorious Pyrates, and also their Policies, Discipline and Government, From their first rise and Settlement in the Island of Providence. In 1717, to the present year 1724 was first published in London in May 1724.22 It contains fourteen chapters that each broadly depict the life of an individual pirate until his/her death. However, these chapters do not convey fourteen discrete, self-contained narratives. Some recount the lives of multiple pirates, other chapters relate the same events, and thematic continuities run through the entire work. These chapters are preceded by a preface and introduction, and are followed by ‘An Abstract of the Civil Laws and Statute Laws now in force in relation to Pyracy’, which accurately details the actions that constituted piracy under contemporary legislation. The paratext of this edition claims that the content is accurate in the preface, and then re-inscribes the rule of law to close the volume.

This book comprises 326 pages printed in octavo format, which cost four shillings. Early eighteenth-century books were printed in a selection of formats that directly related to the size of the finished publication. Folio, quarto, octavo, and duodecimo were the most common, although smaller formats were regularly published.23 Larger books were considered more prestigious, because elaborate details could be placed on the bindings and covers by bookbinders – as Tim Clayton notes ‘until the second decade of the nineteenth century, it was

21 Further work in private libraries and less prominent libraries in the USA would be the next step to investigate this potential edition.
22 On 9 May 1724 Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post advertises that ‘On Monday next will be published, A General History of the PYRATES’. (‘Advertisements and Notices’, Weekly Journal, or Saturday’s Post, 9 May 1724 (17th -18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers, British Library)).
23 These terms reflect the number of times a sheet of paper was folded to create the individual leaves, not a standardised system of sizing. Folio books are the largest, where a sheet of paper was folded once to produce two leaves and four pages, while the sheets used in octavo books were folded three times to produce sixteen pages. (McKerrow, pp. 164–74.).
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rare for a book to be sold in a permanent binding’. Decorative detail was important, because books were also display items that conveyed the wealth of the buyer. However, the larger the format, the more paper needed, and therefore the more money a book cost to produce, because paper was the most expensive part of production for the bookseller. They therefore had to balance status with production costs: producing a duodecimo book might be cheaper and yield more copies; however, they risked not appealing to more affluent readers. By printing the General History in octavo, the publishers chose a more reputable, and therefore expensive, format that was more economical than folio or quarto. The format indicates that it was aimed at a middle-class buyer, who could afford to pay four shillings. This was a significant sum for all but the wealthiest in 1724. 80% of the population earned roughly £1 a week. Four shillings was a fifth of their weekly income. Only the elite and a slowly growing merchant middle class could afford to spend four shillings on a single item. Furthermore, according to Robert Hume three shillings was ‘the top of the “normal” price for a volume’, while five shillings was expensive for a single volume octavo. The General History’s price places it in the lower end of the expensive book market, which could only be afforded by a small percentage of the population.

The title page names ‘Captain Charles Johnson’ as the author. No one has been able to identify a plausible Captain Charles Johnson contemporary to this book’s publication. It is therefore likely that the name was a pseudonym. Several attempts have been made to identify the author, as this chapter later explores. For now, it is worth considering how the pseudonym might have impacted perceptions of the General History. The word ‘Captain’ confers legitimacy; it combines with the text’s assertion of first-hand knowledge to imply that the author had a certain level of maritime experience, and could therefore talk authoritatively on maritime matters. This title suggests that the author of the General History had the same first hand knowledge as many of those who published popular accounts of their voyages in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The use of ‘Captain’ also would have reminded contemporary readers of Captain Alexander Smith, who produced a collection of

25 In early modern England paper had to be imported as there were very few domestic paper mills, therefore, the larger the book, the more paper it used and the more expensive it was. (John Bidwell, ‘The Industrialisation of the Paper Trade’, in The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain Volume V 1695 - 1830, ed. by Michael F Suarez and Michael L Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 200–217 (p. 200)).
27 Hume, p. 384.
criminal biographies focusing on the highwayman in the 1710’s. As this chapter later demonstrates, the contiguity between these texts extends beyond this similarity.

The text also includes three copperplate engravings by Benjamin Cole. Each illustration depicts the individuals in the foreground of a maritime scene. The composition resembles contemporary maritime portraiture. These images are not caricatures – the pirates are presented in a dynamic, heroic light. Cole was a surveyor, cartographer, engraver, and bookbinder based in Oxford, who engraved illustrations for a range of works, generally when commissioned by publishers. Neither the advertisements, nor the title pages, mention Cole, so it is unlikely that his illustrations were famous enough to induce readers to buy, although illustrations would help to sell any book. However, copperplate printing increased the production cost, as it required a different kind of printing press; unlike the cheap woodcut images found in contemporary chapbooks, which could be placed into the same press as the type. The price reflects this, and further confirms an affluent target audience.

The first edition of the *General History* was printed for, and sold by, London booksellers Charles Rivington, J Lacy, and J Stone, and a bookseller in Salisbury, Edward Easton. Rivington, Lacy, and Stone are included in the book’s imprint, while advertisements placed in *The Weekly Journal, or Saturday’s Post* signal Easton’s involvement. The ESTC shows that Rivington and Lacy published a number of surgical, practical, and devotional works together prior to the publication of the *General History*. Little is known about Easton, Lacy, and Stone, save for the details and locations listed by Henry Plomer. Plomer notes that Lacy primarily published legal books, which may explain the accuracy of the legal abstract that concludes the book. In contrast, more information is available regarding Rivington. The founder of the Rivington family publishing house, Charles Rivington was ‘the leading theological bookseller’ in London, who primarily published sermons on commission from his shop, ‘the Bible and Crown’. The *General History* was therefore to be found on the same bookshelves as legal and theological works, an unexpected mix. Rivington was also a member of the first publishing conger, an organisation of booksellers who shared the rights to some of the most profitable

early eighteenth-century works. In addition, he published Daniel Defoe’s *The Complete English Tradesman* in 1726, as well as some of Thomas Salmon’s histories.\(^{33}\) Rivington’s catalogue was designed for readers that were not necessarily looking for a text like the *General History*, but who could nonetheless afford it, having found it in his shop. He also published ‘significant literary works’ later in his career, including *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* by Samuel Richardson (1740).\(^{34}\) When the *General History* appeared in Rivington’s catalogue the bookseller had published a limited number of fictional works as part of a publishing conger, including novels and translations by Penelope Aubin.\(^{35}\) His publication of the *General History* could mark an increasing interest in the publication of fictional genres, signalled by his publication of Aubin and then later, when he published Richardson.

In the early eighteenth century you would expect those named on the imprint to own the copy (the right to print the text). Unusually, this is not the case for the *General History*. ‘An Act for the Encouragement of Learning’ (8 Anne c.19/21) provided that the owner of the copy of any work published prior to the legislation had ‘the sole Right and Liberty of printing such Book’ for 21 years, while any new work would be protected for fourteen years, which could be extended an additional fourteen years if the author still lived.\(^{36}\) Copy was only protected if a member paid a fee of 6d. to register it with the Stationers’ Company before publication. Therefore, authors rarely retained copy rights for their work in this period. Instead, it was typical for booksellers to pay authors a fee in exchange for their copy. The copy right fee meant that booksellers typically only registered copy if they thought a work would be commercially successful, to impede cheap reproductions. However, neither the booksellers, nor the named author, are listed in the Register’s entry for the *General History*. Instead, an entry on 24 June 1724 establishes that the copy right for the *General History* ‘was registered “for Nathaniel Mist”’.\(^{37}\)

Mist was a well-known figure in the early eighteenth-century publishing world and a member of the Stationers’ Company in his own right.\(^{38}\) He was a printer and journalist, who produced

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\(^{33}\) *English Short Title Catalogue* (London; British Library).

\(^{34}\) Bracken et al, p. 238.

\(^{35}\) Bracken et al, p. 239.

\(^{36}\) Lionel Bently and Martin Kretschmer (eds), ‘Statute of Anne, London (1710)’ in *Primary Sources on Copyright (1450-1900)*, (Cambridge; University of Cambridge, 2008)


\(^{38}\) Paul Chapman, ‘Mist, Nathaniel (d. 1737), newspaper printer and publisher’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.*
the periodical, *The Weekly Journal, or Saturday's Post*, later issued as *Mist's Weekly Journal*. By 1720 his publication was one of the most successful opposition papers, which had a sizable London and provincial audience.

According to Michael Harris, Mist’s publications ‘provided for almost ten years the main line of opposition comment within the London press’. His periodical extensively advertised the *General History* between 9 May and 13 June 1724. Two lead articles were also dedicated to the book. The first, on 23 May 1724, promoted it as giving ‘the same Kind of Pleasure [...] as a man [gets] in travelling thro’ a pleasant Country newly discovered where every Thing he meets gives him an agreeable Surprize’. The second, published on 6 June 1724, quoted substantial passages. An additional advertisement appeared in another opposition periodical, *The Daily Post*, on 14 May 1724. Mist does not appear to have advertised in other periodicals, like the *British Journal* or *Daily Courant*. Hence, by advertising the first octavo exclusively in opposition publications, Mist promoted it to a potentially radical and Tory readership. Mist himself was an influential Jacobite and a staunch critic of the Whig government. He was prosecuted several times between 1715 and 1728 for sedition and libel, and subsequently fled to France to avoid further prosecution.

This information allows us to build a more detailed picture of the *General History*’s reader. Wealthy enough to spend four shillings on a book, this reader discovered the text either because they read a key opposition newspaper, by word of mouth, or because they frequented the shops of Rivington, Lacy, Stone, or Easton. The appeal of free advertising may be the practical reason why *The Weekly Journal* advertised the book; nevertheless, this element of the book’s history aligns the *General History* with a network of radical politics and their associated debates. The historical context offered by this advertising history encourages us to trace the presence of Tory or radical sentiment in the text. It invites us to consider the political valences of the literary pirate presented by the text.

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39 ‘By 1720 such weeklies as Applebee’s, Read’s and Mist’s had achieved a national reputation’ (Michael Harris, *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole* (Cranberry: Associated University Presses, 1987), p. 35). Harris notes ‘during the 1720s and early 1730s the *London Journal*, *Mist’s Weekly Journal*, and the *Craftsman* all achieved a sale of 10,000 copies or more’ (Harris, *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole*, p. 55.).


43 Paul Chapman, ‘Mist, Nathaniel (d. 1737), newspaper printer and publisher’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 

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1.3.2 Further editions feature substantial revisions

On 22 August 1724, only three months after the first edition was issued, *The Weekly Journal* announced that 'Next Week will be published A General History of the Pyrates'.

Running until 13 February 1725, this advertisement promoted the publication of a much-changed second octavo edition, which was protected under the June copy registration. The text was renamed *A General History of the Pyrates from their first Rise and Settlement in the Island of Providence, to the present time*. Changes to the title page are worth noting, not least because, as Matthew Day comments, language on title pages was designed 'as an enticement to buy the book'. Variations can indicate a change in strategy. Amendments to the title reframe this iteration of the *General History*. Ideas of governance are diminished when 'Policies, Discipline, and Government' is removed from the title. Similarly, the title looks less like those found on other criminal biographies when 'Robberies and Murders' is not present.

The 'considerable Additions' promised by the title page, advertisements, and amended preface increased the number of pages to 427. The illustration plates were reused, although the plate depicting Blackbeard was partially erased and re-incised. However, the content from the first edition was rearranged, revised, and expanded. Three additional chapters were also inserted. These amendments significantly alter the image of the pirate presented by the *General History*.

The amended preface attributes an increase in the cost to these changes. The sheets of paper necessary meant that it now cost five shillings. This narrowed the text's potential buyers because the additional cost would have been prohibitive for the majority of the population, and was a significant sum even for its middle-class audience. This edition made the *General History* longer and more expensive.

A willingness to charge five shillings may explain why, in August 1724, a new bookseller, Thomas Warner, replaced those involved in the publication of the first edition. Warner produced the *Daily Journal*, where he placed a single advertisement for the *General History* on 24 August 1724. Warner's catalogue features books that share generic similarities with the *General History*. He published a significant number of anonymous works, including Defoe's

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46 Printers and booksellers saved money on printing costs with this common practice throughout the eighteenth century. See Cole, p. 490.


48 Bialuschewski, 'Daniel Defoe, Nathaniel Mist, and the “General History of the Pyrates”', p. 35.
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_The Life, Adventures and Piracies of the Famous Captain Singleton_ (1720).\(^{49}\) He was also involved in the publication of criminal biographies, prose fiction, and travel narratives, such as the third volume of Smith's _The Compleat History of the lives, robberies, piracies and murders committed by the most notorious rogues_ (1720), _A Voyage to and from the Island of Borneo, in the East Indies_ by Daniel Beeckman (1720), _Memoirs of a Cavalier_ (1720) and _Roxana; the fortunate mistress_ (1724). Warner would also go on to publish _The Life of Jonathan Wild, from his birth to death_ in 1725. Placing the _General History_ amongst these titles, with a bookseller who had a reputation for publishing these kinds of works, contextualises it as a prose work of criminal biography, a generic category examined later in this chapter.

Advertisements in the _American Weekly Mercury_, a periodical published in Philadelphia, indicate that the _General History_ was also published in America.\(^{50}\) As there are no extant copies, the little we know about this edition comes from a short series of advertisements printed in December 1724 and January 1725:

> The Second Edition with Additions, of THE GENERAL HISTORY OF THE PYRATES, from their first Rise and Settlement in the Island of Providence to the present Time. With the remarkable Actions and Adventures of the two Female Pyrates Mary Read and Anne Bonny. To which is added, A short Abstract of the Statue and Civil Law in Relation to Pyracy. By Capt. CHA. JOHNSON. Sold by William Bradford in New York.\(^{51}\)

The date of these advertisements suggests that the text took several months to traverse the Atlantic. However, without a copy we cannot compare this edition to the Warner publication. Hanna suggests that the _General History_ is remarkable in being promoted in a colonial periodical, commenting that ‘few books were advertised in early eighteenth-century colonial newspapers, but this was no ordinary book’.\(^{52}\) However, while it is true that this periodical typically advertised runaway slaves and indentured servants, slaves for sale, or available land, it also frequently included advertisements for things sold by the proprietors of the publication, Andrew and William Bradford. William advertised several books through 1723 and 1724, as well as paper and other products. It is therefore likely that convenience and space prompted the advertisement of this edition. It is not automatically a marker of the text’s significance.

In June 1725 Warner published a third octavo edition of the _General History_, with a new title page and an additional set of sheets that detailed the life of John Gow, who had been executed

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\(^{50}\) Mark Hanna identifies these advertisements in Hanna, p. 398.


\(^{52}\) Hanna, p. 398.
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in the same month. Otherwise, the text remained unchanged. The contents pages were not reset to include the new addition. Instead, new sheets were slipped into the book before 'Five Men setting up as Pyrates'. Warner and Mist may have seen Gow's high profile trial and execution as an opportunity to dispose of the remaining stock of the second octavo. However, records for the posthumous sale of Warner's stock in 1734 suggest that the third octavo was also not a success, despite an advertisement in the Daily Journal on 18 June 1725 and Mist's advertisements in Mist's Weekly Journal. These records detail several unsold quires of the third octavo available for purchase. They suggest that either public interest in this particular narrative of pirates had waned, or readers were looking elsewhere, perhaps by buying cheaper versions.

On 9 April 1726 Mist's Weekly Journal declared: 'Just publish'd the 3rd Edition of A General History of the PYRATES'. This advertisement ran until 25 June 1726. This was either an attempt to sell Warner's remaining stock, or the compositor of the newspaper used an old block of type to advertise the publication of a fourth octavo.

In 1726 a new bookseller, Thomas Woodward, began selling a fourth octavo edition. This book was repackaged as volume one of the General History. However, it was largely the same as the third octavo, save for typographical amendments and an expansion of the Gow chapter. Bialuschewski suggests that 'Woodward, who was new to the business, had probably bought the [first volume of the fourth edition] from Mist, whilst in return receiving a promise to handle the publication of a future second volume'. Whatever the agreement, a second volume, The History of the Pirates, followed in 1728. The word 'General' is dropped from the title of the second volume, turning this part of the text into a history of the specific pirates listed on the title page. It presents fifteen new narratives about individual captains as discreet sections. The chapter structure helps to constitute the earlier editions as a complete work.

54 Quires were a collection of unbound sheets that were sold as a set in trade sales. 'Entry 238' in 'Catalogue of the Stock of Thomas Warner', in A Collection of Catalogues of Trade Sales of Books, Books in Quires, and Copyrights, Offered for Sale between 1718 and 1752; with Single Catalogues of Sales in 1792, 1795, 1798, 1814 (London: 1718 - 1814).
56 Bialuschewski, 'Daniel Defoe, Nathaniel Mist, and the “General History of the Pyrates”', p. 36.
57 On 20 July 1728 Mist's Weekly Journal advertised that 'Next Wednesday will be published, the 2nd Volume of the History of Pirates' ('Advertisements and Notices', Mist's Weekly Journal, 20 July 1728 (17th - 18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers in the British Library). The books advertised in this volume corroborate this publication year: A Collection of Several Tracts of the Right Honourable Edward Earl of Clarendon and The History of Japan were published in 1727, while the English translation of The Roman History; with Notes Historical, Geographical and Critical was published in 1728.
whereas the structure used in the second volume implies that the text is a collection of shorter accounts, although the narratives themselves are linked. A section titled ‘Description of Magadoxa in Ethiopia’, which reads like a conventional travel narrative, is also added. This 56-page digression recounts the memoirs of an enslaved man. Additionally, the second volume includes an appendix that adds detail and revises some of the narratives across the two volumes. Therefore, the second volume further rewrites the General History.

The additions and variations in these editions demonstrate that the General History transitioned from a singular book to a text composed of multiple iterations that have unique features. Consequently, I argue that the General History transforms into a narrative tradition early in its publication history.

1.3.3 The book about pirates was also pirated

Thus far, this exploration of the General History has focused on London publications. Easton’s involvement in retailing the first edition is a reminder that books were also sold provincially. Scotland and Ireland had their own distinctive book trades, primarily located in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and Dublin, respectively. Whilst both trades developed enormously through the eighteenth century, I focus on Ireland, because a further edition of the General History was printed in Dublin.

The early Irish book trade was characterised by the mass importation of English printed books that came to dominate the entire market. However, according to Charles Benson, by the start of the eighteenth century the character of the Irish market shifted to reprinting English books.58 He argues that the implementation of 8 Anne c.19/21 exacerbated this trend.59 This legislation did not apply to Ireland, and no counterpart legislation was ever enacted to extend copy protections.60 Thus, Dublin printers could legally reprint any British text, providing they didn’t export the books into Britain. However, as John Feather asserts, preventing the import of Irish reprints ‘was almost impossible’, and while contemporary booksellers ‘may have exaggerated the problem [...] it was a real one’.61 Their reprints may have been legal in Ireland; however, subsequent smuggling activities meant that their London

59 Benson, pp. 68–69.
60 M Pollard argues that ‘though protection within Britain tacitly precluded the sale of foreign reprints, the Act did not spell out the prohibition on imports’ (M Pollard, Dublin’s Trade in Books 1550 - 1800 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 70.).
counterparts accused Irish printers of piracy. Adrian Johns attests that eighteenth-century London booksellers:

liked to believe that Ireland was the true pirate kingdom of their age. They thought their Irish counterparts recognised no morality at all, but would grab whatever came their way, produce inferior knock-off copies, and sell them as fast as possible.

It is in this context that the 1725 Dublin edition of the General History was produced.

Johns explains that the word piracy attained additional meanings in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that had little to do with theft on the high seas. He argues that ‘the post-revolutionary generation gave the term piracy the kind of broad, popular currency that it has enjoyed ever since’, contending that piracy became synonymous with the ‘misappropriation of intellectual property’ after William and Mary’s accession. This evolution saw the word piracy applied to actions that could be called intellectual property theft or copyright infringement, although it would be anachronistic to use these phrases in relation to this period. Those who produced an edition of a book listed in the Stationers’ Company Register committed literary piracy by infringing someone’s copy rights. This rhetorical evolution demonstrates how the language of piracy was used to demonstrate that an act was particularly egregious. It was not just theft to print your own version of a book; it was ‘piracy’. It demonstrates a scale, within language, where certain types of theft are considered worse than others. If pirates of the high seas are considered the enemies of all, to use Cicero’s often cited justification for not treating pirates as enemies in war, then those who copy books are somehow positioned as enemies of all in an intellectual sense.

This Dublin octavo edition replicates much of the first; Captain Charles Johnson is the named author, and its title and subtitles are almost identical: A General History of Pyrates, Their Robberies and Murders, as Also Their Policies, Discipline and Government. From their first Rise and Settlement in the Island of Providence, to the present Year, 1724. The imprint confirms that a printer in Dublin, J Watt, printed this edition; however, there are no details of a bookseller. Either Watt was a printer bookseller and the imprint is an example of an ambiguous imprint, or this edition was printed to smuggle into Britain. Watt’s publication was entirely legal; however, smugglers could be liable to prosecution, although in reality it was difficult to prosecute those who sold Irish prints in England, because ‘before 1739, when the

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62 M Pollard, p. 66.
64 Johns, pp. 42, 19.
65 For discussion of Cicero and his approach to pirates, see Rennie, p. 13.
Importation Act gave full authority for legal action against them, Irish imports were more difficult to label as clandestine. Without a cost, it is difficult to assess whether this edition aimed to undercut Warner. Similarly, it is difficult to determine whether this book was ever sold in Britain. Nevertheless, this edition gestures to the text’s perceived popularity and saleability.

This edition was not necessarily unauthorised. A number of booksellers and authors addressed the Irish reprint problem by selling their copy to selected printers. The edition could feasibly be the result of a relationship between Watt and Mist. This seems unlikely however, because it does not use the most up to date copy, when compared to the English octavos. Alternatively, I suggest that Watt copied from the only edition he could get hold of – the first, because it had been circulating for a while. The potential sale of this edition in Britain could explain why Mist and Warner produced a third edition, aiming to render the Irish reprint even more out-dated.

It is ironic that a book about pirates may have been the victim of piracy. This suggests that piracy at sea was an attractive subject; enough that those involved in the book trades thought the potential profits could justify the risk of breaking copy. The association of maritime with textual piracy is strengthened by the fact that another publication about pirates, John Gay’s Polly, was also the object of sustained pirate activity, as this chapter later explores. It is tempting to think that stories of maritime piracy precipitated intellectual piracy, and to seek a causal connection with individual texts. But as Johns point out, the emergence of piracy as a language for intellectual theft during the high period of maritime piracy involves a broader cultural logic.

1.3.4 Translations of the General History demonstrate its cultural penetration and transfer

It is unlikely, although not impossible, that any of the London editions travelled beyond the British Isles, because few Europeans spoke or read English in the early eighteenth century, save for perhaps merchants who had business interests in Britain. This is not to say,  

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67 M Pollard, p. 74.
68 Benson suggests that while there was no formal legislation, ‘customary right in literary property developed’ where ‘whoever it is first in possession of the manuscript of any work, or the London editions; and actually puts it to press or publishes his intention is so doing, had the undoubted right of publication’. This ‘worked well enough for London and Dublin booksellers to be able to collaborate on a regular basis’. (Benson, p. 370).
however, that European readers did not engage with English books. Translations of works originally published in English appeared in Europe as early as the late seventeenth century. Latin, French, and German were the most popular languages for translations, because they had audiences that extended beyond national borders.\footnote{According Fabian and Spieckermann Latin was used because it was the international language of scholars, French as ‘the habitual language in the world of the elegant and educated’, and German as the ‘new lingua franca in many parts of central, northern and Eastern Europe’. Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese translations of English books were generally only read nationally. (Fabian and Spieckermann, p. 524.).} Bernhard Fabian and Marie-Luise Spieckermann argue that translations were ‘disseminated both nationally and internationally’ to be read by ‘linguistically proficient social and cultural elites in a variety of countries’.\footnote{Fabian and Spieckermann, p. 530.} Translations of English works flourished primarily from the middle decades of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, some works, like Robinson Crusoe and the General History, were translated before the mid-century boom.

Translations of the General History frame it as a text about English pirates. These editions express the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century notion that England was ‘a “nation of pirates”’.\footnote{Burwick and Powell, p. 19.} They make explicit what Burwick and Powell call ‘the inexplicit position of the General History’ – ‘that the most notorious pirates are what we might call “British” for the main players in Johnson’s tome are all English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish’ (p. 20). Burwick and Powell suggest that ‘Johnson’s implication, intentional or not, is that piracy is the special province of his own nation’ (p. 20). The paratext included in translated editions amplifies this aspect of the General History, framing the pirates as English, and the English as pirates.

Between 1724 and 1734 four different translations in three languages framed pirates in this way. However, the first translation was not French or German, as Fabian and Spieckermann’s analysis might lead us to expect. Instead, in 1725 Robert Hennebo translated the General History into Dutch for a bookseller in Amsterdam, Hermanus Uytwerf. This is perhaps explained by the fact that Holland ‘came to act as the chief intermediary between England and the Continent […] Via Holland, other publishers and sellers appear to have become business partners, especially in Germany […] and in France’.\footnote{Fabian and Spieckermann, p. 524.} A relationship with the English publishers of the General History would explain why the text was published in Dutch first.

According to Mary Helen McMurrann:

in general, we cannot assume that a translation came directly from an original, or suppose a translation provided a literal or complete rendering of its source, because
it was common enough for translators not only to alter the text but also to add some original work to it.\textsuperscript{74}

We should therefore expect that an eighteenth-century translation would differ from English iterations. Gillian Dow explains that:

in the eyes of literary reviewers, it was the duty of the 18\textsuperscript{th}-century [sic] translator of prose fiction to adapt the work to the taste of the receiving culture – to domesticate and 'improve' it – leading to a great many 'translations that are in fact in part or wholly creative originals.\textsuperscript{75}

Thus, European editions were produced in a context where adaptation and change were expected in any translation. However, while I cannot say whether these editions change the language and content of the \textit{General History}, I do observe that they have the same form and characters as the English editions.

The Dutch edition, \textit{Historie Der Engelsche Zee-Roovers}, follows the same structure as the English editions.\textsuperscript{76} The text is presented as a collection of biographies split into chapters that focus on a character and his crew. These chapters run in the same order as the first octavo, and use the same title formulation: ‘Historie von den Zee rover Bartholomew Roberts en zyne makkers’.\textsuperscript{77} The title page echoes that of the first octavo by including the subtitle ‘concerning the piracies, murders, wickedness, abuses, etc’. The terms ‘wickedness’ and ‘abuses’ add a moral dimension to the subtitle of the Dutch edition. This octavo foregrounds the female pirates in two ways: first, by exclusively naming them on the title page and secondly, by amending the copperplate engravings to depict the women with their breasts exposed.\textsuperscript{78}

These paratexts frame the women as exciting curiosities that would draw readers to the text.

In 1726 two French editions were published in duodecimo as \textit{Histoire des pirates anglois, depuis leur etablissement dans l'isle de la Providence, jusqu'à present}.\textsuperscript{79} Jacob Walter, a London bookseller, published the first of these. Walter's Westminster location, as detailed on the title page, suggests the edition was produced for a French reading audience in England. Printing in duodecimo is likely to have widened the audience, and may therefore have been an attempt to maximise profit. Subsequently, Parisian booksellers Etienne Ganeau and Guillaume

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{76} In English this title translates to 'History of the English Pirates'. All Dutch translations are courtesy of Merel Veldhuizen.
\textsuperscript{78} For discussion of these illustrations see Rennie, pp. 80–82; Sally O'Driscoll, 'The Pirate's Breasts: Criminal Women and the Meanings of the Body', \textit{The Eighteenth Century}, 53.3 (2012), 357–79.
\textsuperscript{79} All French translations are courtesy of Alastair Dawson.
\end{footnotesize}
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Cavelier Fils published a ‘corrected’ second edition under Johnson’s name, with the same title and an almost identical title page in the same year.

Neither French edition identifies a translator. This was common, as Dow observes: ‘translators rarely confined themselves to one genre, and are themselves frequently liminal figures’.\(^\text{80}\) Both title pages include the same subtitles as the Dutch edition: they describe ‘all their adventures, piracies, murders, cruelties, and excess’ and point to the stories of Bonny and Read as significant narratives. This similarity suggests that the Dutch edition was the blueprint for the French editions, demonstrating a process of cultural transfer through the Netherlands that returned the text to Britain in a different language. Ann Thomson and Simon Burrows comment:

exchanges were not always (perhaps not even most frequently) simply two-way but involved or passed through other European countries. This is particularly true in the early part of the period, when the role of the French Huguenot communities in Holland was vital to journalism translation, and publishing and played a crucial role in the transfer of British ideas, works and so on to the French-speaking world.\(^\text{81}\)

These translations of the General History exemplify how works moved between countries in Europe, as Thomson and Burrows observe more generally.

Two years later Johanna Cristoph König, a bookseller based in Goßlar, produced a German octavo translation titled *Schauplaz Der Englischen See-Rauber*. Johnson’s name is printed in a large red type, while the translator is recognised by the initials ‘J.M.D’. Investigating the translations of both ‘J.M.D’ and Hennebo could provide further insight into the process of translation in the eighteenth century, but is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, I turn to the question of how this text travelled, and what the title page emphasises. This edition is derived from both an English and a French version, giving a further insight into the network of cultural exchange this text traversed. The General History was first published in English, then Dutch. French translations followed, which in turn prompted the publication of a German version.\(^\text{82}\) This edition includes a unique portrait frontispiece of King George II. The title page emphasises the documentary and travel elements by observing that it was ‘translated to German from certified documents, and continuously with historic-geographic remarks’.\(^\text{83}\) Other editions mention the abstract on the laws of piracy, but rarely note the

\(^{80}\) Dow, p. 693.


\(^{82}\) All German translations are courtesy of Inga Franzen. (Captain Carl Johnsohn, *Schauplaz Der Englischen See-Rauber*, trans. by J M D (Goßlar: Johanna Cristophe König, 1728)).

\(^{83}\) Johnsohn, Title Page.
geographic descriptions. Thus, this is the first edition to explicitly recognise the hybridity of the text on the title page.

These European translations do not add pirates to the corpus of the *General History*, unlike many of the English editions. There were certainly French, Dutch, and Spanish pirates and privateers active in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, yet these editions do not add any characters to ‘domesticate’ the *General History*, to use Laurence Venuti’s term. Instead, the implicit ‘Britishness’ of the pirates is rendered explicit when the text transfers across Europe in editions that are more fully and substantially about English pirates. Whether these editions make amendments that amplify this characteristic deserves further investigation, but for now a speculative reading suggests that these books are exceptions that prove the rule about the faithfulness of eighteenth-century translations.

The *General History* was translated amidst what Bethany Wiggin calls a second phase in the transfer of English prose fiction. Wiggin observes that a number of English language texts were translated into European languages before 1750. She argues that ‘between 1680 and 1730, the early novel’s passport was French’ and that ‘readers across the continent voraciously consumed “little French books”’. By 1680 translations of the same texts were being read across Europe; however, by the 1720’s French dominance began to waver ‘as English models increasingly dominated the now well-established European market for fiction’. She reads German translation trends, with a particular focus on German editions of *Robinson Crusoe*, to argue that ‘England's stature as tastemaker only grew after 1723’. The publication of European translations of the *General History* in the 1720’s suggest that it was part of a shift in European prose fiction translation.

In another respect, the *General History* is an outlier. Angus Martin estimates that 10% of first editions published in France between 1701 and 1750 were translations. Of the one hundred works he lists ‘the largest group (about thirty)[…] are from English originals, and mostly by contemporary authors’. He suggests that the list of translated works, which include Swift, Defoe, Manley, and Elizabeth Rowe, demonstrates how ‘French publishers for the most part chose, for obvious commercial reasons, to translate works that had been successful in their

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84 Captain Charles Johnson, *The History of the Pyrates*, Title Page.
87 Wiggin, pp. 7–8; Wiggin, p. 5.
88 Wiggin, p. 185.
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home country’. Many of the texts named by Martin are works of prose fiction. Works of popular literature, like criminal biography collections, were not often translated. For example, the History of Highwaymen, discussed later in this chapter, does not appear to have been translated. Thus, something about the form and/or content of the General History made this text worth translating alongside some of the most popular prose texts of the day.

1.4 Abridgements, serials, and fascicles

1.4.1 Abridged editions demonstrate the General History was read by a less affluent audience

Most of the books discussed above were published in octavo. However, this was far from the most common form of publication. A growing audience for cheaper, smaller books developed through the eighteenth century, as literacy increased. Concurrently, a considerable market for cheap abridgements of popular books emerged, as the increasingly literate population wanted to consume the most popular narratives but could not afford the cost. Chapbooks cost a fraction of the price, and frequently came with woodcut illustrations, which, despite their low quality, added to the book’s appeal. The cost of the octavo editions mean it is not surprising that the General History was also abridged.

In 1725 Edward Midwinter published a duodecimo book called The History and Lives of the most Notorious Pirates, and their Crews. The History and Lives is anonymous, but features the same characters as the octavo editions, with two additional narratives. Similarities in language and content indicate that this is an abridgement of the General History, which brings these editions into the scope of my thesis. The History and the Lives conforms to chapbook conventions by featuring ‘Twenty beautiful cuts’. It thus offers more illustrations than its octavo predecessors. Perhaps surprisingly, given the brevity that characterised the chapbook form, this abridgement is prefixed with ‘An Abstract of the Laws against Piracy’, which ends the octavo editions. The presence of an abstract suggests that Midwinter saw the legal aspect as essential to the text. This edition cost one shilling, double what Hume calls the typical price of a chapbook, which may have been an attempt to distinguish the History and Lives from contemporaneous chapbooks. Nevertheless, it still cost far less than the octavo editions, thereby widening the likely audience for this material. The book sold well enough to prompt further editions. A third edition by the same bookseller was sold for the same price in 1729,

90 Martin, p. 94.
91 The History and Lives Of All the Most Notorious Pirates, and Their Crews, 1st edn (London: Edward Midwinter, 1725).
92 Hume, p. 384.
and a fourth followed in 1732. These abridgements differ; for example, the third removes the chapter ‘Captain Fern, and his Crew’ and adds ‘The Life of John Upton, alias Hopton’ and ‘The Life of Samuel Johnston’. The eighth and eleventh editions, published in 1765 and 1788 respectively, show that this abridgement remained popular long after the ‘golden age’ of pirates on the sea ended.

In contrast, less is known about another abridgement published between 1724 and 1734. The British Library catalogue lists a 1727 edition published in Dublin under the title of The History and Lives of all the most Notorious Pirates, and their Crews, from Capt. Avery, who first settled at Madagascar, to Capt. John Gow. Unfortunately, it is marked as destroyed; nevertheless, the catalogue record notes that the book was ‘abridged and adapted from “A General History of the Pirates... by Captain Charles Johnson”’. This edition was likely produced for the London market, and may have been a pirated version of the Midwinter abridgement, given that it includes the same number of woodcut illustrations, and has the same title.

1.4.2 Serial versions are distinct editions

Serial publication became an important part of the book trade in the early eighteenth century. As Harris highlights:

any representation of print and the book between 1690 and 1820 must focus on the serial (and serialisation) not just as a peripheral topic nor as a prelude to the nineteenth century, but also as a central component of the general analysis. Two methods of serial production developed between 1700 and 1740; periodical serialisations and publications distributed in sheets or as number books known as fascicles. Harris argues that periodicals serialised to fill space, entertain, and maintain their customer base, while Christine Ferdinand argues that individual serials were produced to attract an audience that could not afford to purchase pre-bound books. The General History was serialised in both forms.

Regular periodical publication was not an eighteenth-century invention; however, the lapse of the Licensing Act in 1695 resulted in a significant expansion of the London and provincial

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93 The History and Lives Of All the Most Notorious Pirates, and Their Crews, 3rd edn (London: Edward Midwinter, 1729).
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periodical presses. By 1712 about 20 periodicals circulated on a weekly basis.\(^9\) In response, the government introduced a system of taxation targeting these publications. The 1712 Stamp Act required all publications printed on a whole sheet of paper to carry a 1d. stamp, those printed on a half sheet to carry a \(\frac{1}{2}\)d. stamp, and any spanning one to six sheets to pay two shillings for each sheet included in one copy.\(^97\) Leonard Davis argues that this legislation was an ‘attempt to ban most newspapers,’ while Harris concurs that it was designed ‘as an indirect curb on publication’.\(^98\) As a result, proprietors increased their prices, and employed measures to avoid paying Stamp Duty. Some refused to pay, while others increased their size to pay less overall.\(^99\) These additional pages needed content, which booksellers filled by publishing original material like essays, or by inserting previously published texts.\(^100\) Periodicals therefore became a hybrid entertainment form, where readers could keep abreast of domestic and foreign affairs, view advertisements, and consume part of a prose work.

The *General History* was one amongst many early eighteenth-century texts serialised in periodicals. R M Wiles contends that these publications printed ‘some of the day's best-sellers and standard works in history, biography, fiction, and literature of travel’.\(^101\) Works like Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and Eliza Haywood's *The Fatal Secret; or Constancy in Distress* were serialised in periodicals like *The Original London Post; or Heathcote's Intelligence*. The following account draws extensively from my examination of the publications and Wiles’s landmark study, *Serial Publication before 1750* (1957).

In September 1724, two weeks after the second edition was published, two London periodicals began to serialise the *General History*. The *Original London Post* and *Parker's London News* published sections on 7 and 9 September respectively. Wiles contends that the *Original London Post* printed the preface and contents between 7 September and 30 September, while my investigation of *Parker's London News* show that it serialised the preface, introduction, and the first and second chapters of the second octavo through September and October (p. 29). The serial finished in the middle of the second chapter on 2 November 1724, leaving much of the text unprinted.

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\(^97\) Danby Pickering, *The Statutes at Large, From the Eighth to the Twelfth Year of Queen Anne* (Cambridge: Charles Bathurst, 1764), pp. 369–70.
\(^98\) Davis, p. 96; Harris, *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole*, p. 19.
\(^100\) Harris, *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole*, p. 179.
Material from *The Original London Post* suggests that there was a relationship between Heathcote, the owner, and ‘the Proprietor’ of the *General History*. Wiles quotes: ‘Note: The History begins next; which being taken from the Original Copy, with the Consent and Approbation of the Proprieter, must be more satisfactory and Diverting than what is Piratically and Clandestinely inserted in another paper’ (p. 29). Heathcote directly connects the reader’s enjoyment with the purported legitimacy of his serial, aligning pleasure with legality and righteousness. He employs piracy as a metaphor in his attack, tapping into a thriving notion of piracy as a cultural category. Heathcote displays a keen awareness of the contemporary usage, and deploys the word ‘piratically’ for specific effect rather than as an ethical stance against literary piracy. Heathcote showed no concern for the ethics of reprinting published works, when he serialised Haywood’s *The Fatal Secret* with no credit (p. 28). His use of the word ‘piratically’ does not reference the infringement of the registered copy owner’s right. Instead, the term is invoked alongside the word ‘Clandestinely’ to cast Parker as a shady figure slyly attempting to undercut Heathcote’s business. Heathcote’s invocation of piracy and consent is performative, stemming from a concern about his own success.

Parker’s response was simple:

> Since our Opposers in the Printing of Half-Penny Posts, have begun the History of the Pyrates in their Papers of Monday last, we think the same to be as free to be copy’d by us as by them; and therefore intend to continue it from the Beginning to the End, to oblige our Customers, but with this Regard to Mr Mist, the Proprietor thereof, that if he can prevail with others to desist, we shall cheerfully do the same.¹⁰²

The Stationers’ Company did not actively seek out copy infringement. Instead, it was prosecutorial practice for the copy owner to appeal to the Company before it considered injunction or confiscation. Therefore, Parker’s words directly challenge the principle that a copy holder could control their publication in the world of the periodical press. Furthermore, Parker equates the content of the *General History* with any other material published in a periodical, suggesting that competition makes copying permissible. According to Will Slauter, it was common practice for publications to copy domestic and foreign affairs content from one another.¹⁰³ Parker categorises the *General History* as news by claiming that it does not differ from any item lifted from a competitor’s pages. In doing so, Parker affords the *General History* factual status by approaching it as a compilation of foreign affairs. His framing of the text once again highlights the significance of fiction, veracity, and historiography, and reminds us that periodical publications also contributed to the culture of readers and reading identified by Loveman. It is therefore important to remember that ‘news’ was not necessarily

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¹⁰³ Slauter, pp. 38–53.
Chapter One
‘true’, and not allow this proprietor’s rhetorical move to justify using the General History as archive. After all, Wiles’ reading of the publication history suggests that Parker’s gambit was unsuccessful. He argues that the abrupt end to the serial suggests that ‘Mr Mist in some way or other prevailed’ and stopped Parker from illegally printing the text.\footnote{Wiles, p. 29.} However, the attempt signals that the hybridity of the text makes it amenable to these kinds of moves. The literary becomes news in part because of its rhetorical devices and use of the verifiable.

In April 1725 the Government’s extension of the Stamp Act to periodicals that ran over one sheet of paper came into force.\footnote{Danby Pickering, The Statutes at Large from the Ninth Year of King George I. to the Second Year of King George II. (Cambridge: Charles Bathurst, 1765).} Publishers responded by reducing publications to a single sheet.\footnote{Harris, London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole, p. 22.} Harris comments that this ‘put space at a premium’, hence publishers needed to be judicious in their choice of content.\footnote{Harris, London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole, p. 23.} However, Davis suggests that some publications attempted to circumvent the law by ‘printing the news segment of their papers on only one sheet, for which they paid the penny tax per sheet, and then adding a literary section which would not be taxable since it contained no news’.\footnote{Davis, p. 97.} He suggests this is a key moment where narrative and news were distinguished from one another. Michael McKeon contests Davis’ reading of the act, challenging it as evidence for Davis’ conclusion.\footnote{McKeon, pp. 83–84.} Notwithstanding, Davis’ observations about the format of periodicals suggest that serialisations took different forms after April 1725. It is therefore even more striking that further serialisations were printed after this in single sheet publications, carrying a 1d stamp. These serialisations spanned columns in the main publication. Their inclusion speaks to how quickly prose works became an expected part of a periodical.

Two Exeter publications, Brice’s Weekly Journal and Farley’s Exeter Journal, serialised the General History in 1725 – 1726. Few issues of Farley’s Exeter Journal remain, although dates can be estimated from the issues still available: Farley began printing it around 15 October 1725, and it ran until at least 20 May 1726. Meanwhile, extant copies of Brice’s Weekly Journal show that it began printing on 15 October, and finished on 12 August 1726. Andrew Brice’s lengthy introduction cites competition as his motivation:

one had attempted to graft on my Stock, and undertaken ’to OBLIGE his Readers with the true History of the PYRATES [...] And lest the Want of any Thing in mine which might be found in the Performance of another should be urged by any to its
Prejudice, this reassured my Resolution of publishing therein a faithful Abridgement of the same.\footnote{110} Whereas both Parker and Farley copy verbatim, Brice abridges the text. Brice amends, rewrites, and removes substantial sections of the \textit{General History}. He does not copy Midwinter’s abridgement, but rather inconsistently reworks chapters; some are reduced to two paragraphs, while others remain as lengthy as the octavo iterations. The complete serialisation in \textit{Brice’s Weekly Journal} therefore offers a further imagining of the pirate figure.

\subsection*{1.4.3 Fascicles marketed the text as a series of criminal biographies}

Serialisations were also published in single sheets or as fascicles, as eighteenth-century booksellers and printers ‘discovered [...] that people who would not pay thirty shillings for a thick folio volume were quite willing to purchase the same book, three sheets at a time, by paying six pence a week’.\footnote{111} Each fascicle comprised a gathering of sheets sold for a few pennies apiece. Printers and booksellers began publishing number books in the late seventeenth century; however, the 1730s saw a particular boom in their production and sale. The number of discrete publications and the size of print runs increased. Wiles argues that some series had as many as two or three thousand copies per instalment, which often had to be reprinted because proprietors underestimated demand (p. 5). Texts were consumed over longer periods; therefore, the success of these serialisations (and indeed their continued publication) depended on booksellers engaging and maintaining an audience willing to pay for each instalment every week. Many serials did not find an audience; these consequently remained incomplete (p. 119 – 122). The obvious implication is that any completed series generated enough profit to make their production, distribution, and advertisement costs worthwhile. Fascicles were not ephemeral. On the contrary, publishers often produced title pages, prefaces, and contents pages retrospectively and offered them for free, so that the buyer could bind the collection together.\footnote{112}

On 23 June 1733 James Janeway began publishing a series by Captain Charles Johnson, titled \textit{A General History of the Lives and Adventures of the Most Famous Highwaymen, Murderers,}
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Street-Robbers, &c. To which is added, A Genuine Account of the Voyages and Plunders of the most Notorious Pirates. The series collated volume one of Johnson’s General History with four additional pirate stories, and selected criminal narratives paraphrased from Smith’s Compleat History. It thus begins a new phase in this publishing history in two senses. First, the pirates of the General History were placed alongside other criminal narratives, including the highwayman, which transitioned the pirate from a stand-alone figure to one of a selection of ‘remarkable villains’. This contiguity is one reason for examining the relationship between the highwayman and pirate in this thesis. Secondly, this edition disseminated the narratives in a cheap and popular format. 73 instalments of the two-sheet folio were published weekly through 1733-34, each costing 2d each or 8d a month. Wiles identifies that this series was extensively advertised throughout its run and could be purchased from a number of locations across London. The completion of the series indicates that the General History was more successful in finding an audience when it was sold cheaply, in parts.

In 1734 Janeway used these sheets to produce a folio edition of the General History, which included a large selection of copperplate prints. The production of this volume suggests that Janeway marketed the text to both a mass market and a wealthier reader who could afford to pay for the entirety. However, we should be careful before assuming that the existence of this edition means that the text had a large wealthy audience, because collecting together leftover sheets to be sold as a whole was a prudent way to profit from remainders. 109 of this edition’s 481 pages focused upon the ‘most Notorious pirates’. The paratext found in the octavo editions is omitted. Instead, a short paragraph separates the pirate narratives from the rest:

many Gentlemen have express’d a great Desire to read the Actions of those celebrated Bravo’s, who have made so great a Noise in the World, we hope none of our Subscribers will take it amiss that we anticipate their Place, and put them in the Middle of the Book.

Volume one of the General History and four additional narratives are surrounded by the stories from Smith’s collection. The series structure, which effectively isolates each story from the others, is maintained in this folio, presenting the text as a collection, rather than an interconnected whole. Nevertheless, each chapter is almost identical to the second octavo, although new material is offered in four additional pirate narratives. It is difficult to ascertain

114 Wiles, p. 293.
115 Wiles, p. 224.
whether this edition sold well. However, Olive Payne published a similar folio in 1736, suggesting that there was a market for compendia.\footnote{Captain Charles Johnson, \textit{A General History of the Lives and Adventures of the Most Famous Highwaymen, Murderers, Street-Robbers, Etc} (London: Olive Payne, 1736).}

Janeway’s editions remake and reframe the \textit{General History}. The chapters that constitute the first volume are restyled as ‘a genuine account of the voyages and plunders of the most notorious pyrates’ that is ‘added’ to the ‘General History of the Lives and Adventures of highwaymen, murderers, street-robbers, &c’.\footnote{Captain Charles Johnson, \textit{A General History, Compendium Edition}, p. Title Page.} The pirate is cast as a complementary addition to the main focus on highwaymen, murderers, and street robbers. S/he becomes one in a collection of types as the text develops into a compilation focused on the nascent category of the literary criminal. Simultaneously, these editions undermine the cohesiveness of the \textit{General History}. The legal abstract is omitted and the brief reflection discussed above replaces the expansive introduction found in earlier editions. It no longer has chapters, which, alongside the serial nature of fascicle publication, exaggerates the self-contained quality of each narrative. Each chapter was sold separately, and while the publisher hoped that one would collect a full set, it was entirely feasible that readers could select instalments as they desired. Thus, the text begins to resemble a criminal biography collection as each pirate narrative begins to look more like the criminal biographies that enclose them. Yet, the tone and structure of these narratives resists conventionalisation, as the chapters themselves remain largely unchanged. This new iteration retains travel narrative elements, and thus maintains the hybrid nature of the \textit{General History}.

The opening instalments of this series suggest a compiler playing to a knowing and alert audience. Shakespeare’s fictional highwayman, John Falstaff, and the mythic figure of Robin Hood begin this series. Opening the collection with these particular narratives suggests the compiler was engaging with readers who were aware of, and attuned to, the way ‘true’ accounts negotiated the complexities of fact and fiction. Both Falstaff and Hood were familiar to eighteenth-century readers. According to scholarship, Falstaff was particularly popular in what Peter Sabor and Paul Yachnin call a ‘massive uptake of Shakespeare in the eighteenth century’.\footnote{Sabor and Yachnin detail how eighteenth-century writers produced ‘a series of major editions, […] many essays and books on matters Shakespearean, and much lively debate’. (Peter Sabor and Paul Yachnin, ‘Introduction’, in \textit{Shakespeare and the Eighteenth Century}, ed. by Peter Sabor and Paul Yachnin (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 1–9 (p. 2).} Amanda Cockburn notes that Falstaff ‘was a prominent and controversial figure in the popular cultural imagination of this era: \textit{Henry IV} Parts 1 and 2, along with \textit{The Merry
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Wives of Windsor, were among Shakespeare’s most frequently performed plays’. Nancy Mace concurs that Falstaff was ‘one of Shakespeare’s most widely admired characters in the eighteenth century’. Cockburn suggests that early eighteenth-century audiences had a magnanimous view of Shakespeare’s highwayman, suggesting that ‘Falstaff’s position as favourite of [Queen Elizabeth] did wonders for his reputation: it suggested his vices were harmless good fun rather than threatening and harmful to the public good’. Hence, according to Mace and Cockburn, Falstaff was not just well-known; he was popular with audiences from the start of the century.

Falstaff is an entirely fictional character: whether there was an actual medieval outlaw called Robin Hood is contentious, and has been the subject of numerous studies. We do know that Hood was a popular subject through the early modern period in narratives set in a number of historical settings. Stories featuring the outlaw circulated through the eighteenth century, particularly in the gentrified form of Martin Parker’s ballad, ‘A True Tale of Robin Hood’, and in a collection entitled Robin Hood’s Garland. Dobson and Taylor suggest that Hood’s transition into a highwayman contributed to the ‘continued appeal of the medieval greenwood hero’, because ‘he could so readily be assimilated into the [...] popular tradition of the “gentleman of the road”’.

Janeway brings questions of fact and fiction playfully to the fore by opening the series with the fictional companion to Henry V and a legendary outlaw. Falstaff’s stage profile suggests that this was not an attempt to trick the reader into thinking that Falstaff was a historical figure, although we cannot say that all readers would know that the character was fictional. Instead, this is a move consonant with the General History’s complex interweaving of the invented and the verifiable. Criminal biography collections, which catered to an alert and knowing audience, characteristically interspersed fiction and history.


122 Cockburn, p. 145.

123 Dobson and Taylor summarise ‘Before 1377 there lived many Robin Hoods in England but none who can be certainly identified with the later legendary hero; before 1377 England suffered from many outlaws but none whose exploits can be confidently interpreted as the genesis of the greenwood legend [...] all we know for certain about the Robin Hood legend at the beginning of Richard II’s reign is that it existed, that it had found expression in the form of ‘rymes’ or verses’. (Dobson and Taylor, p. 1). See Stephen Knight, Reading Robin Hood: Content, Form and Reception in the Outlaw Myth (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015); Stephen Knight, Robin Hood: A Complete Study of the English Outlaw (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994).

124 Dobson and Taylor, Rymes of Robin Hood: An Introduction to the English Outlaw, p. 25.
1.5 Pirates and highwaymen

1.5.1 Collected criminal biographies are a both precursor to, and a latter form of, the General History

Janeway's editions paraphrase their inland accounts from an earlier collection of criminal biographies, which I refer to as the History of Highwaymen. This collection, published between 1713 and 1721, can be understood as a pre-history of the General History, in two senses. First, it shows how criminal narratives were produced and disseminated in collections, rather than standalone pamphlets. Thus, the editorial changes to the General History can be seen as a further development of the criminal biography collection. Consequently, reflecting on the publishing history of the earlier collection produces a relevant publishing model to compare to that of the General History. Secondly, the earlier collection directly influences the General History's representation of the highwayman and other types of inland rogues in the last edition published in this ten-year period. Placing these changing depictions alongside other prominent literary highwaymen allows me to identify what makes the pirate generated by the General History an exceptional literary type.

Before turning to criminal biography collections, this section briefly overviews late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century criminal biography. Criminal lives were a popular topic in this period – Robert Singleton uses a restrictive set of criteria to identify 58 separate criminal biographies published between 1651 and 1722, while Lincoln Faller estimates that ‘some five or six thousand separate accounts of criminals’ lives and/or trials survive from the period 1650 – 1800 in England’. These texts were typically cheap broadsides or pamphlets that described a single criminal’s life. Many appeared just days after the subject’s execution, or were published in the same year. The publications drew upon the ‘commercially published Sessions Papers’ and the accounts from the Ordinaries of Newgate.

The character and conventions of a criminal biography are largely determined by the crimes the protagonists commit. Most criminal biographies include specific narrative devices; what Richetti calls ‘the journalistic essentials – details of parentage, education, early employment,
names of confederates, amount of proceeds from crimes, records of arrests and punishments’,
Singleton concurs, noting a variety in the level of detail:
these fifty-eight books make some show of covering the entire life of the subject, but actually only a few devote more than one or two pages to the important years of childhood and youth. Indeed, it is not unusual to cover the period from birth to marriage in one sentence. (p. 30)
Criminal biographies also vary in how they narrate their subject’s lives. Faller analyses two main types of criminal biography; the ‘criminal-as-sinner’ narrative told in murderer biographies, and the ‘criminal rogue’ produced in accounts of ‘a highwayman or other notorious thief’. The criminal-as-sinner protagonist ‘takes a graduated sequence of steps downward, away from the social norm toward ever greater sin, and then an equivalent sequence of steps back up towards social reintegration and grace’. Faller suggests that the criminal’s confession gives murderer narratives a redemptive dimension. In contrast, criminal rogue biography lacks a discernible sequence. Faller argues that these narratives are episodic, relating ‘a series of discrete and independent actions, which proceed without apparent logic and resist normal efforts to organise them coherently’ (p. 126). The varying types of thief are presented through discreet episodes, in a life characterised by multiple instances of criminal behaviour. It is useful to remember Faller’s assertion that the History of Highwaymen is ‘entirely representative of’ criminal rogue biography when discussing its representation of the highwayman (p. 126).
Scholars agree that criminal biography was popular. Singleton calls it ‘a popular genre – short, simple, and topical – apparently intended for a barely literate working class reader’. Faller is more specific, suggesting that ‘for economic reasons alone it is unlikely that [apprentices], or anyone else of limited means, could have provided a large market for criminal lives’. Instead, he argues that ‘tradesmen, artisans, merchants, lower-ranking professionals (to say nothing of people of higher means) made up the largest part of the market’ (p. 47). While less affluent readers would likely have access to criminal biography, through shared copies in taverns, these texts were produced because more affluent readers could pay the cost of ‘sixpence to a shilling’ (p. 47).
Criminal biography collections are not static texts. Like the General History, the History of Highwaymen was published in a number of changing editions in the first ten years of its life.

128 Richetti, p. 25.
129 Singleton, p. 66.
131 Singleton, p. 63.
132 Faller, Turned to Account, p. 127.
The History of the Lives of the Most Noted Highway-men, Foot-pads, House-breakers, Shop-lifts and Cheats, of both sexes, in and about London, and other Places of Great Britain, for above fifty years last past was published in two duodecimo volumes in December 1713. The two volumes collectively present 49 episodic and self-contained accounts that particularly focus on the highwayman. It is rare that a character will be more than mentioned in another’s chapter. A second edition of the first volume followed in January 1714. It is hard to tell whether this was a response to demand, or a tactic for selling existing stock. Either the first volume was more popular than the second, or a new title page was produced to reignite interest.

The History of Highwaymen evolved through later editions. A third volume, published in May 1714, added 33 narratives to the text’s corpus. A fifth edition, produced in December 1718, further developed this criminal biography collection. This edition condensed the three volumes into two by moving eleven accounts into the first volume and placing the entirety of the third volume into the second. The collection was retitled A Compleat History of the Lives and Robberies of the most Notorious Highway-men, Foot-pads, Shop-Lifts, and Cheats, of both Sexes, in and about London and Westminster, and all parts of Great Britain, for above an hundred Years Past, and continu’d to the present time. Instead of offering ‘the history of the lives’, this edition presents ‘A Compleat History of the Lives and Robberies’. The crimes associated with these figures are simultaneously elevated to equal their stories as individuals, and distinguished from their lives. The subjects of the text are no longer the ‘most noted’; they are ‘notorious’. These terms have different connotations: ‘noted’ has a positive tone in Samuel Johnson’s Dictionary as ‘remarkable; eminent; celebrated’, while notorious was often used negatively.

Johnson’s Dictionary remarks that notorious ‘is commonly used of things known to their disadvantage; whence by those who do not know the true signification of the

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134 Of the 49, 24 are called highwaymen. In contrast, the next most frequent categorisation is housebreaker, with 13 protagonists.


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word, an atrocious crime is called a notorious crime'. Instead of being remarkable, the criminals of the fifth edition are the perpetrators of an atrocious crime.

This iteration adds material whilst reducing the number of volumes. The first volume begins with the 'Thieves New Canting Dictionary', which defines various slang words. This suggests that one must immerse oneself in a particular vernacular to understand the life stories that follow. Those who read these stories were likely to be far removed from the world where this language was regularly used, as literacy rates amongst the poor make them an unlikely and unprofitable audience to target. The text follows this reading aid with four additional highwayman narratives. Each additional character further develops the highwayman as a literary type.

Further editions cast the highwayman as a 'rogue'. The Third Volume of the Compleat History of the Lives, Robberies, Piracies, and Murders committed by the most Notorious Rogues, &c. From the Time of Edward the Confessor, published in September 1719, added new accounts of highwaymen, pirates, and other criminal types to the corpus of the History of Highwaymen. This volume reframes the text in two ways: by amending the timeframe and introducing the notion of the 'rogue'. It shifts the emphasis of the History of Highwaymen from offering recent narratives to describing a long history of criminal activity in Britain. Crime committed by 'rogues' becomes the focus in the structure of this title, with a list of criminal types subordinated in a subtitle: 'the Continuation of the wicked Lives of Highway-men, Murderers, Foot-pads, House-breakers, Shoplifts, Water-pads, Kid-lays, Hook-pole-lays, Molly-lays, Bumming lays, and the surprizing Adventures of several famous Pirates'. In using the word 'rogue' in the place of a list of types the title suggests it is an all-encompassing term. Yet, in another sense it enables the text to move away from the idea of criminal types and focus on the crime. In both this text and contemporary literature the rogue also appears as a separate kind of figure, an idea that is discussed in chapter three. The History of Highwayman's use of the term in this final supplemental volume highlights how 'rogue' can at some points act as an overarching term for all criminal types, and at others appear as a separate literary type.

The introduction of pirates in this volume delineates inland and maritime crime. While the other editions present the 'Lives and Robberies,' this volume depicts the 'Lives, Robberies, Murders, and Piracies'. The subtitles demonstrate that while highwaymen have 'wicked lives', the lives of pirates are 'surprizing adventures'. As a result, highway robbery is personal

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138 Faller, Turned to Account, p. 47.
deviance, whereas piracy is an adventure. These subtitles signal how the outlaw pirate is in some way an unorthodox explorer and venturer imbued with a certain remarkable or unforeseen quality.

The History of Highwaymen offers another kind of pre-history, by showing how pirate narratives were constituted before the publication of the General History. The volume includes four pirates. While Captain Kidd and Captain Avery are included in the General History as two of the most infamous pirates of their age, neither Zachary Moulton nor Captain Dalzel have particularly remarkable afterlives. The account of Captain Avery reflects the contemporary approach to this pirate discussed in my introduction, and therefore provides a comparison to the account offered in the General History.

These collections question the nature of criminality and its meaning for society. The title page of the 1714 third volume declares that it describes ‘the most secret and barbarous Murders, and unparalell’d Robberies formerly done; but also an Account of about an hundred Murders and Robberies committed by Criminals executed at the Assizes last held throughout the Kingdom’. The text emphasises the immediacy of the narratives contained in the volume in this subtitle. It also claims to contain ‘certain rules how all persons shall escape being robbed in the future’, linking to what Robert Shoemaker identifies as the prevailing fear of being a victim of crime. A tension emerges when you read the text, between the idea that one either is a criminal, or simply commits criminal acts. While the title foregrounds the lives of the individual subjects, the subtitle places the criminal acts first and foremost. This tension appears across texts about criminality in the eighteenth-century, and is explored across this thesis.

Criminal collections are published under authoritative sounding pseudonyms. ‘Captain Alexander Smith’ is offered as the author across multiple editions of the History of Highwaymen, a move that is echoed across selected editions of the General History in the use of ‘Captain Charles Johnson’. Like Johnson, Captain Alexander Smith cannot be traced beyond a small selection of publications. Pat Rogers asserts that the name was ‘almost certainly a pseudonym’ and that ‘nothing is known about the identity of the compiler or compilers of the

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publications attributed to Smith’.141 This name was used in a number of contemporary
collections, and was later attached to another collection of criminal narratives in the form of
Memoirs of the life and times of the famous Jonathan Wild, together with the history and lives of
modern rogues (1726).142 The title ‘captain’ has a particular function in this pseudonym,
adding an ambiguous authority to the work. The text does not tell the reader whether Smith
was a Captain in the navy, the military, or aboard a merchant ship; nevertheless, it is a term
that denotes some kind of authority or command that renders these texts more respectable.

The publishing history of the History of Highwaymen suggests that the mobility of the General
History was not typical of criminal biography collections. Publishers of ephemeral and
popular texts sold the earlier collection. J Morphew was a ‘publisher of political pamphlets,
State trials, news-sheets and novels, and one of the principal booksellers of the period’,
according to Plomer, while Anne Dodd was ‘one of the most influential mercury women in
this period’, according to Paula McDowell.143 Mercury women were a ‘specialised kind of
distributor of periodicals, who sold them wholesale, as well as individually’.144 Dodd’s
involvement with the text is a reminder that women were producers, as well as consumers, in
the eighteenth-century book trade. Meanwhile Morphew’s involvement is another signal that
Smith’s name is a pseudonym designed to obscure the author of the work. Treadwell
observes that Morphew was one of ‘a small group of specialists, who, for a fee, would put
their names to and handle the sale and distribution of printed works “tho the property [was]
in another person”’.145 While the imprint of the third edition suggests that the text moved to
another bookseller, Sam Briscoe, Germaine Greer notes that ‘in 1711 Briscoe was virtually
taken over by James Morphew, who signed his entries in the register books’.146 Morphew and
Briscoe were intimately connected, unlike the diverse publishers of the General History.

In contrast, other contemporary forms of highwayman narrative do not evolve between
editions. The Beggar’s Opera is perhaps the most well-known and, according to Hal
Gladfelder, ‘the most successful dramatic work not just of the year, but of the century’.147 It

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144 McDowell, p. 56.
145 Treadwell, p. 34.
147 Greer, pp. 40, 43.
initially ran for a 62-night season in 1728, with the theatre filled with ‘as many spectators’ as manager John Rich ‘could possibly fit’.\textsuperscript{148} It was also performed by a number of companies in London and beyond.\textsuperscript{149} A bookseller located near the theatre, John Watts, first sold the play in print in 1728. My comparison of early editions demonstrates that while musical scores were added to the paratext, the language and plot of the play were unchanged in the ten years after its first publication. This is despite the publication of seven different editions by different booksellers between 1728 and 1737.

These publishing histories suggest that additions and structural changes are characteristic of the criminal biography collection. In many ways the criminal biography collection is an open form, in that it allows the addition of any number of narratives, which can, and do, impact upon the text’s figuring of criminal types. However, the individual narratives in the \textit{History of Highwaymen} do not differ from edition to edition. Tracing continuities is as valuable as tracking differences when analysing the relations of pirates to other literary types. Together, continuities and contrasts highlight the complexity and richness of the literary figure of the pirate.

\textbf{1.5.2 Literary highwaymen become literary pirates}

Megan Wachspress and Erin Mackie identify ties between pirates and highwaymen as cultural and historical figures. Wachspress considers the affinity between pirate and highwayman in legal theory. She calls the pirate ‘a figure of enormous significance in international law of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century’, arguing that the highwayman was ‘the land-thief analogue to the sea-thief pirate’.\textsuperscript{150} She suggests that ‘pirates were not considered unique among English writers of the seventeenth century; rather, they were a type of thief’ that were treated equivalently to the highwayman (p. 312). In her reading, pirates and highwaymen threatened political order and property rights, which in turn meant that their actions were not distinguished from one another in practice (p. 312). Instead, the difference came from the fact that pirates did not threaten individuals, but threatened international order by disrupting colonial attempts to expand their power overseas (p. 322 – 23). She suggests that ‘pirates in international law were not so much

exceptional figures but merely the prototypical criminals’ (p. 336). However, she builds her argument around the jurisprudence of piracy and moves quickly to large abstract points about the criminal in legal theory. Wachspress's focus on legal theory and this particular moment of jurisprudence does not account for the detailed texture of the cultural moment, nor does it engage with the detail of the pirate in both literary representations and broader circulation. I argue that comparing the two figures highlights the complexity of the pirate: in some respects they are exceptional figures, in others they are, to use Wachspress's phrase, ‘prototypical criminals’. This mediation between exceptional and prototypical is part of what makes the literary pirates generated by the *General History* worthy of extensive examination.

Mackie meanwhile focuses on how the pirate and the highwayman contribute to the development of the modern polite gentleman as an archetype of masculinity. She does not directly address the relationship between the pirate and the highwayman, but rather analyses them in service of her reading of the gentleman. She argues that while scholarship typically separates the criminal and the gentleman, both are the product of manners and a history of dissent. Her study emphasises that masculine figures ‘share a gender identity’ and ‘gendered interests’ (p. 3). Thus, she suggests that bringing together figures like the pirate, highwayman, and rake ‘show how the creation of illicit space underwrite prestige and enshrines many of patriarchy's privileges’ (p. 4). Turning to the highwayman, she argues that the gentleman highwayman is a ‘nostalgic figure’ that ‘participates in modes of masculine prestige associated with the pre-1689 world’ (p. 83). Accordingly, the gentleman highwayman ‘is a nostalgic figure prominent in popular eighteenth-century cultural negotiations of legitimacy, masculinity and social status’ (p. 83). In contrast, Mackie addresses the pirate ‘as an exemplar of the complicities among law and outlaw’ (p. 114). She argues that ‘the cultural myth of the pirate generated by [early pirate biographies] reveals [...] how dominant culture exploits the powers and structures of authority that it officially renounces’ (p. 114). Mackie argues that these figures are integral to ideas of masculinity developed through the eighteenth century. Understanding them as ‘culturally prestigious masculine types’ underlines the role that illicit masculine figures have in affirming patriarchal modes (p. 5).

Janeway's editions of the *General History* refashioned the text and made the pirate more like the highwayman. In contrast, other contemporary texts reverse this transition. *Polly*, Gay's 1729 sequel to the *Beggar's Opera*, sees the highwayman hero transform into a pirate in the

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West Indies. Macheath the highwayman becomes Morano the pirate when he uses blackface to disguise himself. Burwick and Powell suggest that the ties between the General History and Polly extend beyond their contemporaneous publication and criminal characters. They credit Rediker with the suggestion that ‘the titular heroine [of Polly] is not merely a retread of Polly Peachum from The Beggar’s Opera (1728), but rather an amalgamation of that character’s backstory with Anne Bonny and Mary Read’. They detail how the characterisation of Polly draws on the representation of the two female pirates in the General History. They suggest that ‘when John Gay composed Polly, he married the warrior women of popular balladry to the highly popular genre of criminal biography by drawing on the General History’ (p. 129). They also argue that ‘we see Johnson in bits of pirate culture Gay dramatizes, such as the articles Morano references’ (p. 129). Their arguments are convincing and suggest our understanding of both the pirates of the General History and the highwayman turned pirate of the Beggar’s Opera and Polly is illuminated by examination of the relationship between them.

Polly’s publishing history demonstrates the popularity of this narrative of a highwayman-turned-pirate. Gay chose to publish ‘at his own expense’ in March 1729 after the Lord Chamberlain banned the performance of Polly. His play earned him ‘£1200 from subscriptions alone’, James Sutherland demonstrates that the play was popular enough that book pirates extensively disseminated and advertised illegal copies. He describes three separate editions prolifically advertised in London publications, noting how Gay challenged these unauthorised editions in the periodical press. The publishing histories of Polly and the General History demonstrate the multiple forms of book piracy in the eighteenth century. Polly was pirated in octavo editions that were brazenly advertised in periodicals, while the General History was published in the legally grey spaces of Ireland and periodical serialisations. The piracy of Polly underlines an association between maritime and intellectual piracy, however, as Johns argues, there was a broader context to how the language of piracy was used to describe intellectual theft during this period.

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153 Burwick and Powell, p. 123.
155 Gladfelder, p. xi.
157 Johns, p. 42.
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1.6 Reception of the General History

There is limited information available about the reception of the General History in its early life. It is far easier to chart the text’s impact in its afterlife – we know that Scott’s library held multiple copies, and that Stevenson’s editor gave him a copy. It is therefore possible to trace the text’s literary influence upon texts published in the nineteenth century. Almost 100 years after the text’s initial publication, a compendium edition remained valuable enough for a member of the royal family to spend a significant sum on it. A copy of Payne’s 1736 compendium containing George IV’s personal binding stamp and bookplate is held in the library of George IV at Carlton House. According to the library’s provenance records the then Prince Regent brought the text in 1812, from booksellers Becket and Porter for £13.13.0. It is also possible to trace the text’s scholarly reception through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. However, the conditions during its early life, particularly the lack of review journals, make it difficult to assess contemporary reader responses.

The American Weekly Mercury does, however, suggest some potential contemporary readers. On 8 July 1727 the periodical’s ‘Foreign News’ section discussed the payment of bounty money for sailors who participated in the capture of Bartholomew Roberts and his crew:

It is remarkable that none of the Officers and Crew of the said Ship knew they were entitled to the said Bounty, till the publishing of a Book, entitled, A General History of Pyrates, where the said Proclamation is taken Notice of. Upon the Information of which, a Petition was preferr’d to the Right Honourable Robert Walpole, Esq. first Lord of the Treasury, &c. who was pleased immediately to order the proper instruments to pass Seals for the Payment of the said Money, and it was accordingly paid.

Hanna suggests that the article is evidence ‘that some common sailors read the book or had it read to them’. On the contrary, Rediker offers this entry as evidence that Walpole himself read the General History. He comments ‘ironically, after Walpole read about the bilking of the seamen in Johnson’s History of Pyrates, he intervened personally to pay them’. On balance, Hanna’s reading is more convincing, suggesting that people who worked aboard ships consumed the General History.

A copy previously owned by Gosse, and now held at the National Maritime Museum, contains a promising avenue to begin an investigation of the readers of the General History. Gosse’s notes detail annotations in his copy of the second octavo:

158 Many thanks to Emma Stuart, Senior Curator of Books and Manuscripts at the Royal Collection Trust, for providing this information.
160 Hanna, p. 400.
161 Rediker, Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age, p. 221.
There is much writing in a childish hand on the two leaves – evidently by the owner Elizabeth Gounter Nicoll. In one place she has written, “Elizabeth Gounter Nicoll My Book 1738. In another, and in a more formed handwriting, is written “the gift of his Grace the Duke of Ancaster.”

Elizabeth Gounter Nicoll was the eldest daughter of Sir Charles Gounter Nicoll, MP and politician, and Elizabeth Blundell. She likely died in childhood or before marrying, as the ODNB calls her sister, Francis Catherine, ‘the only daughter and heir of Sir Charles Gounter Nicoll and his wife Elizabeth Blundell’. The only clue to Elizabeth’s age when she received the book is the ‘childish hand’ noted by Gosse. It appears that Elizabeth died between receiving this book in 1738 and before her sister’s marriage in 1755. Gounter Nicoll and Blundell were both wealthy – Blundell took a dowry of £70,000 into her second marriage, while Francis Catherine had a dowry of £100,000. The ‘Duke of Ancaster’ mentioned in the annotations is Elizabeth’s then-Stepfather, Peregrine Bertie, 3rd Duke of Ancaster and Kesteven and Marquess of Lindsey, who married Blundell in 1735. These annotations present a girl gifted the text by her wealthy and titled stepfather. This suggests that children or adolescents in extremely wealthy families read the General History, and offers a number of possibilities for future exploration.

The provenance of selected editions also provides limited insight into the readership of the General History through the eighteenth century. The Sloane Printed Books database indicates that the second octavo and compendium editions held at the British Library came from Sir Hans Sloane’s library, while sales catalogue records suggest that copies of the 1725 octavo, 1726 Ganeau translation, and the 1734 compendium were owned by Consul Joseph Smith and bought by George III in 1756. The General History was considered significant enough for two contemporary book collectors and a monarch to add it to their collections.
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Further work is needed to ascertain what kind of readers bought and/or kept the text. We could look to the provenance of library collections, annotations, and the contents of private collections for evidence of who read the text and how they responded to it. However, this work is a larger project beyond the scope of this thesis. I note this limited information about readers to outline the difficulties of studying the readers of the *General History*.

1.7 Authorship

As I have already noted, ‘Captain Charles Johnson’ was likely a pseudonym. Author identity had little importance in the early eighteenth century, and anonymity was not exceptional. Nevertheless, scholars have attempted to discover ‘the author’, or at least an individual responsible for the composition of many anonymous and pseudonymous texts. Charles Johnson, Charles Rivington, Daniel Defoe, and Nathaniel Mist have all been suggested as authors of the *General History* at various points over the last 100 years. I do not seek to discover an author, or to argue that any particular individual composed the *General History*. Rather, in exploring those who have been associated with ‘Captain Charles Johnson’ and the arguments made for their authorship, I consider how assumptions about authorship have influenced critical approaches to the *General History*. I also suggest they offer frames of reference to place the text within.

It seems feasible that a writer called Charles Johnson might have adopted the moniker ‘Captain’ in an attempt to render the contents more believable. One potential author is a Charles Johnson who wrote several plays contemporaneous to the *General History*. His 1713 play, *The Successful Pirate*, focuses on a pirate king named Arivagus who is revealed to be the infamous Captain Avery in the epilogue. The play dramatises events described in various pamphlets published in the early 1700’s: the pirate’s infamous capture of the Great Mogul’s Ship, the *Gang-i-sawai*, and an imagined plot to overthrow Avery. However, while the play is about Avery, John Robert Moore argues that ‘as the playwright banteringly confessed in the Epilogue, the only real piracy in his drama was the taking of the spectator’s money for an entertainment which had nothing to do with piracy’. The lines Moore refers to call the play itself an act of piracy because Avery’s name is used to ‘illegally [seduce] Half a Crown/ From ev’ry Lover of a Play in Town/; That he has neither brought you Plot nor Wit,/ Nor ought that

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*John Robert Moore, Defoe in the Pillory and Other Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1939), p. 130.
is diverting’. The purported lack of plot, wit, or entertainment is linked to piracy, not the lack of content depicting piracy at sea. Nevertheless, Johnson’s biography and background make him an unlikely candidate. The text contains a significant amount of maritime detail that would only have been familiar to someone who had been at sea, which, as Cordingly comments, ‘it is hard to imagine Johnson the playwright, who was ridiculed for being fat and for spending all of his days in Buttons Coffee House, writing with any conviction or knowledge about the perils of life at sea’. For similar reasons, it is unlikely that Rivington was the author. There is no indication that the bookseller ever wrote, nor does his biography suggest that he travelled beyond London. Rivington was unlikely to have the knowledge reflected in the text’s deployment of maritime terminology.

Defoe and Mist, by contrast, are more plausible authors. Moore made a credible case for the former in 1939. His work has played no small part in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century project to attribute previously anonymous works to Defoe, where hundreds of texts were added to the Defoe canon. According to J. Paul Hunter ‘at the end of the eighteenth century, just over a hundred titles were attributed to Defoe, and by 1971 [...] the list had grown to 570’. Accordingly, Kathleen Kincaid argues, “Defoe” has become a vast, wide-open main entry under whose shelter many of the vagabond writings of his day seeks [sic] identity, rehabilitation, and prices in guineas’. The debate over what should be included in Defoe’s canon continues, as Kincaid summarises.

In the absence of any historical or documentary sources tying Defoe to the General History, Moore turns to circumstantial and stylistic evidence. He contends that Defoe’s interest in seafaring, the lives of criminals, and his ‘lifelong interest in piracy’ supports the attribution. Furthermore, he points to Defoe’s ‘astonishing’ knowledge of geography and the ‘constant references to his first-hand knowledge of seamen’ in his writings as further evidence that Defoe had the background and interests essential to the text’s composition. He argues that the General History contains ‘irrelevant allusions to Defoe’s minor hobbies’ and a series of central themes that correspond with what Moore calls Defoe’s ‘enthusiasms’: trade, projects,

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176 Kincaide, pp. 101 - 134.
177 John Robert Moore, pp. 135–39.
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languages (p. 186). The bulk of Moore’s analysis then identifies style and content similarities between the General History and other works attributed to Defoe, including Robert Drury’s Journal, A Letter from Scotland to a Friend in London, The King of Pirates, The Four Year’s Voyage of Capt. George Roberts, and The Life of John Gow. He argues that the Gow chapter of the General History is an edited and condensed version of the latter pamphlet, and that the similarities between the General History and Robert Drury’s Journal could only have come from ‘similarity in the style and manner of thinking of the author’ (p. 179). Moore’s analysis and comparisons are comprehensive and persuasive, and it is not surprising that many research libraries attributed the General History to Defoe in response. However, more recent scholarship challenges Moore’s attribution.

P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens’ 1998 publication, The Canonisation of Daniel Defoe, examines the methodologies and biographies of those involved in the early twentieth-century canonisation project. They question whether using ‘favourite phrases’ as evidence of a particular author is reliable, noting that attribution projects often rely on ‘the wish for an oracle, and the corresponding temptation to set oneself up as such an oracle, whose unsupported judgement can be invoked as an authority by fellow scholars of a later generation’. Furbank and Owens directly challenge several of Moore’s attributions. They argue Moore frequently uses words like ‘must’, ‘unquestionably’, and ‘indisputably’, unconsciously establishing himself up as the ultimate arbiter of what was written by Defoe (p. 39). Moreover, they suggest that Moore’s case for the authorship of the General History relies entirely on internal evidence, ‘awkward manoeuvres’, and upon attributions that form a house of cards, where each relies on the accuracy of another (p. 103 – 4). They particularly challenge the connection to, and parallels with, Robert Drury’s Journal, arguing that his evidence for the two attributions is cyclical. Furbank and Owens’s case against attributing the text to Defoe is thorough and convincing. Cordingly goes as far as to say that they ‘were so thorough in their demolition of Moore’s theories that it seems we must abandon the attractive idea that Defoe wrote the History of the Pirates and look elsewhere’. Nevertheless, prominent Defoe scholars Paula Backscheider and Maximillan Novak both challenge Furbank and Owens’s deattributions. Kincaid summarises their positions: ‘both believe that none of [Furbank and Owens’] suggestions for exclusion should be followed, although [Backscheider] does think their work should make scholars more cautious of many of his works, which is more than Novak admits’. The overall debate over Defoe deattributions

178 The British Library, for example, lists the Midwinter abridgements under Defoe in their catalogue.
179 Furbank and Owens, p. 40.
181 Kincaide, p. 115.
continued through the end of twentieth century, and beginning of the twenty-first, resulting in what Kincaid calls ‘the separation into two camps of scholars’. In the case of the General History, some remain convinced of Defoe’s authorship. Rediker continues to attribute the text to Defoe, and the 1999 reprint of Schonhorn’s edition retained Defoe’s name. However, a number of other scholars, including myself, are convinced by the arguments against Defoe’s authorship.

Using contemporary documentary evidence, Bialuschewski convincingly argues that the copyright holder, Mist, could have written the General History. He places the publishing history of the first four octavo editions alongside a comprehensive biography, to argue that Mist was at least central to composition. He emphasises Mist’s background as a sailor and notes how Mist’s publications advertised the text extensively. Crucially, he identifies contemporary documents that connect Mist to the General History and the Johnson pseudonym. He emphasises the importance of the Stationers’ Company register, points to an undated letter found in Townsend’s State Papers that instructs the questioning of a Mr Watson who ‘corrects [the sheets of the Lives of Pyrates] for Mist’ as evidence that Mist was the author, and suggests that an anonymous satirical pamphlet published in 1728, Mist’s Closet Broke Open, which contains two fictional letters between ‘Capt. Johnson’ and Mist, suggest that his authorship was common knowledge. Bialuschewski combines biographical data with publishing history to create a compelling case for why editions were published at particular moments, primarily pointing to Mist’s legal struggles and need for income. His identification of contemporary documentation solidifies his argument.

While it seems probable that Mist was involved in the composition of the General History in some way, my purpose is not to argue for a particular individual, nor do I intend to identify an author. Instead, I use the fact that Defoe and Mist have both been considered at different times as credible authors to open up connections for literary analysis. While I am convinced by Furbank and Owen’s arguments, Defoe is a significant figure in the period. His name frames the General History in the context of adventure narratives, the early novel, and in conversation with other contemporary texts about criminality. Similarly, Mist situates it within a specific network of periodical publication, and radical and Jacobite politics.

In the absence of any definitive proof of authorship, the General History is left authorless. As Mark Vareschi comments ‘we typically come to characterize and know the text through the

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182 Kincaide, p. 129.
183 Bialuschewski, ‘Daniel Defoe, Nathaniel Mist, and the “General History of the Pyrates”’.
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figure of the author: we have a named agent ostensibly responsible for the text’. Consequently, the General History becomes a space of shifting authority, which does not have the author as an originary figure. Just as there is no one text of the General History, there is no singular author.

Conclusion

The General History was disseminated in a number of forms between 1724 and 1734. Its publishing history is a microcosm of the early eighteenth-century book trade. It provides an insight into the many ways a text could be disseminated in the first third of the eighteenth century. Furthermore, these editions differed in form, and content. No two editions published in this ten-year period include all of the same pirates, or identical accounts in every narrative. There is therefore no authoritative edition of the General History that includes everything published under the title of A General History of the Pyrates. We should consequently approach the General History as a narrative tradition, not as a single text. In conceptualising the General History as a narrative tradition, we open space for considering how the text is changed and adapted across not only this ten-year period, but also in modern renderings of the text and its contents.

This chapter traces a process of assimilation, whereby the innovative interwoven structure of the General History is adapted to conform to the literary conventions of criminal biography. After 1734 the text was predominantly published in the more conventional forms of the compendium and abridgement, particularly by later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century publishers. This chapter also refines and challenges common assumptions about the General History. I suggest that the proliferation of editions does not necessarily equal popularity; that the production of further editions may instead be a response to a challenging publishing environment, where book pirate activity usurped potential readers. This is not to argue that the text was not popular, as the production of abridgements and its placement in the limited space of periodicals indicate that the General History was perceived as popular content. Rather, I suggest a more nuanced interpretation of dissemination that accounts for all of the publishing conditions of the early eighteenth century. Crucially, I argue that we should not limit our readings of the text to the octavo editions.

In this account of the early life of the General History we see the significance of other criminal types in the literary context. Highwaymen were not only published in the same kinds of texts, they also come to be part of the General History itself. They are a comparable literary type

185 Vareschi, p. 1.
that brings the pirate into relief. In comparing the representation of fellowship and leadership in the General History to its representation in selected highwayman narratives I produce a reading of the pirate as an exceptional literary type that, nevertheless, is not completely divorced from other literary criminals that appear within the same publishing contexts and texts.

Understanding the General History as a changing and changeable narrative tradition not only enables, but also encourages comparison between editions. This develops an understanding of how characterisation, narrative, structure, and form highlight or diminish how certain themes and concerns are conveyed through this collection of interwoven pirate stories. My interrogation of the figure of the pirate as generated by the narrative tradition has significant implications for cultural understandings of the pirate.
Chapter 2  Fellowship

The first chapter discusses the many editions of the *General History* published 1724 – 1734. I identify two types of difference that influence my reading of the pirate figure. The first, the addition of new chapters, reinforce images or contrast episodes found in other chapters. The second, amendments and additions to the chapters of the first octavo, alter the depiction of specific pirates. The remainder of this thesis focuses primarily on the editions that feature the pirates of the first volume – the octavo, compendium, serialised, and abridged editions. None of the narratives contained in the 1728-second volume appear in subsequent publications; therefore these narratives do not shift over the ten-year period. They do, however, contrast or reinforce elements expressed in the first volume. I therefore primarily focus on the first volume in its various forms, with selected references to the second volume.

I argue that communality and leadership are central to the *General History*’s imagining of the pirate. This argument contrasts with Richetti’s view, that part of the ‘fascination’ unique to the criminal, and particularly the pirate, is that ‘they embody the most dangerous and revolutionary forces of the age – the radical individualism which summarizes the totally secular view of experience’. Individuals drive early eighteenth-century criminal narratives – criminal biographies narrate a single life story, the earliest criminal novels centre a single character, and the Ordinary of Newgate’s accounts individuate their subjects. Richetti’s reading of the pirate is influenced by how the text’s chapters are structured to follow the conventions of criminal biography. Each chapter focuses on the life of a single captain, prompting readers to view each pirate as a unique and individualised character. However, the logistics of sailing make co-operation essential, as circumstances preclude a character from pirating alone. While I agree that the captains of the *General History* are individuated, we should also recognise that community is at the heart of pirate endeavour in this text. To focus on the chapters as individual criminal biographies obscures both the impact of the crew across the text, and the many links between chapters.

The two-clause structure of the *General History*’s chapter titles signals the central duality of communality and leadership in the text. Each chapter title, save for those in the compendium, follows the same formula: ‘Of Captain Avery and his Crew’. This formulation places the captain and their crew as important parts of each narrative. On the one hand, the individuated captains primarily represent pirates as protagonists; however, the co-operation of a homosocial group is essential to the action and purpose that drives the pirate. Character, action, and purpose come together to construct the pirate as a literary figure. Changes in the

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1 Richetti, p. 75.
depiction of communality and leadership generate a shifting figure of the pirate between 1724 and 1734. This chapter examines this co-operative aspect, by analysing what I call ‘fellowship’.

2.1 ‘Fellow’, ‘fellowship’, and ‘honour’

2.1.1 Pirates are ‘Fellows’

The *General History* does not use the word ‘fellowship’. Nevertheless, I argue that this concept is important in the text’s construction of the pirate. I follow the approaches of Jeffrey Singman and A J Pollard in delineating the terms ‘fellow’ and ‘fellowship’. While neither explicitly distinguishes between ‘fellow’ and ‘fellowship’, they nonetheless approach the two concepts as connected, yet also distinct ideas. For example, Pollard comments: “Fellowship” is, of course, closely linked to the word fellow. A fellowship is both the position of fellow and a collective of fellows’. I discuss fellowship in relation to the fellow, but also explore further connotations of communality and community. I begin by arguing that pirates are fellows in the *General History*, before suggesting that the text attaches modifiers to the term ‘fellow’ to amplify its meaning. I then discuss scholarship on the use of these terms across relevant outlaw narratives, which supports my use of fellowship to describe communities of fellows aboard ships.

Modifiers shape our understanding of how the term fellow is used across editions. Pirates are called ‘Fellow’ or ‘Fellows’ numerous times across the *General History*. There are points where the word is ‘used as an informal term for a man or a male person’, while there are other moments where meaning is more ambiguous. Some characters are ‘bold and dissolute’ fellows when they become pirates, while others are ‘able and desperate’. The former suggests a collective of moral degenerates, while the latter echoes the sentiment of the preface’s call for a fishery to employ exploited and unemployed seamen. In contrast, tried and executed pirates are often ‘poor’ fellows – their lack of power and assumed damnation renders them pitiable. A further category of ‘fellow’ is unique in the narratives of Bonny and

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3 There are 90 instances of the word in the second edition alone.
7 To be poor was not just to lack funds, it also could mean that one was ‘mean; depressed; low; dejected’ or ‘paltry; mean; contemptible’, ‘[a word of slight contempt] wretched’ (‘Page View, Page
Read. These chapters present ‘young’ and/or ‘handsome’ fellows with whom the women become smitten. In all of these cases the term ‘fellow’ can denote a man. However, in other moments the text ties the categorisation of ‘fellow’ to communality, rather than masculinity.

The second octavo explicitly ties the ‘fellow’ to pirate communality in ‘Of Capt Bartho Roberts and his Crew’. A speech added in this edition emphasises that being a fellow is more than being a person by attaching a modifier to the word. One pirate, Dennis, outlines the characteristics of the ideal captain:

> it is my Advice, that, while we are sober, we pitch upon a Man of Courage, and skill’d in Navigation, one, who by his Council and Bravery seems best able to defend this Commonwealth, and ward us from the Dangers and Tempests of an instable Element, and the fatal Consequences of Anarchy; and such a one I take Roberts to be.

>A Fellow! I think, in all Respects, worthy your Esteem and Favour."

‘A fellow! In all respects, worthy your Esteem and Favour’ is a character that acts in the best interest of the collective by leading them in battle, by effectively commanding their negotiation of the sea space, and by managing relations to enable productivity. Calling the crew a ‘commonwealth’ imagines this kind of fellow in service of a collective. Roberts is imagined as a particular kind of man who exhibits characteristics valued by the pirates. Courage, technical skill, and charisma enable him to effectively lead, control, and, most importantly, protect the pirate crew. The General History conceptualises a ‘worthy fellow’ in this moment.

The General History conveys some of the ideas expressed in Samuel Johnson’s Dictionary when it attaches modifiers to ‘fellow’ alongside signifiers of communality:

1. A companion; one with whom we consort
   In youth I had twelve fellows like unto myself, but not one of them came to a good end
   *Ascham’s Schoolmaster.*
   To be your fellow,
   You may deny me; but I’ll be your servant,
   Whether you will or no
   *Shakespeare’s Tempest.* […]

2. An associate; one united in the same affair
   Each on his fellow assistance calls;
   At length the fatal fabric mounts the walls. *Dryden’s Virg.*

3. One of the same kind […]
   A shepherd had one favourite dog: he fed him with his own hand, and took more care of him than of any of his fellows. *L’Estrange’s Fables*

4. Equal; peer […]
   So you are to be hereafter fellows, and no longer servants. *Sidney.*

5. One thing suited to another; one of a pair.

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Chapter Two

When virtue is lodged in a body, that seems to have been prepared for the reception of vice: the soul and the body do not seem to be fellows.

*Addison’s Spectator*, no. 86.9

These definitions and complements emphasise companionship and collectiveness, gesturing to the existence of a peer group, a sense of similarity, and some notion of equality. The quotation from *The Tempest* emphasises equality within companionship, while *L’Estanges Fables* illustrates how those concerned must be alike in some way. While Dennis’s speech conveys similar ideas – the ‘commonwealth’ is a peer group ‘united in the same affair’ – his account of ‘a worthy Fellow’ extends beyond belonging to a crew that are similar to one another. Therefore, exhibiting skills and talents the pirates need to be successful, and acting in the interests of the collective are also integral. In this pirate company a leader should show himself to be a worthy fellow.

The second octavo embeds the idea of behaving as a worthy fellow into an interaction between Roberts’ company and a group of soldiers. In the first octavo the soldiers request to join the company:

> but our Pyrates entertain’d so contemptible a Notion of Land-Men, that they absolutely refused to receive them; at last, upon their earnest Prayers and Intreaties, they admitted some of them out of Charity, as they were pleased to term it, allowing them no more than a Quarter-Share; so they were taken on Board.10

In comparison, in the second octavo:

> the Pyrates were at a Stand, they entertain’d so contemptible a Notion of Landmen, that they put ‘em off with Refusals for some time, till at length, being weary’d with Solicitations, and pittyng a Parcel of stout Fellows, which they said, were going to starve upon a little Canky and Plantane, they accepted of them, and allow’d them ¼ Share, as it was then term’d out of Charity.11

The pirates in both iterations reluctantly permit inexperienced ‘landsmen’ to join their voyage. However, in the second octavo the soldiers are called ‘a Parcel of stout Fellows’ who are ‘accepted’ into the fellowship, albeit under different terms to the experienced sailors who can contribute to the joint interests of the collective. The potential starvation of the soldiers motivates the pirates as much as the soldiers’ ‘solicitations’. In comparison, the pirates of the first octavo respond only to ‘their earnest Prayers and Intreaties’. In their act of charity they ‘admit’, rather than ‘accept’. The second octavo thus imagines this episode as a moment of

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‘fellow-feeling’, which *Samuel Johnson’s Dictionary* suggests is synonymous with sympathy.12 ‘Fellow-feeling’ is separated from ‘fellowship’ by two other terms associated with both fellow feeling and sympathy: ‘fellowlike’ and ‘fellowly’. These words are jointly defined as ‘like a companion; on equal terms; companionable’.13 In the later editions the pirates and soldiers are equal in social status, and Roberts’s company marginally extends their fellowship as a result of both sympathy and commonality. As such, the second octavo makes explicit the significance and resonances of the worthy fellow introduced in the first octavo and expressed across this narrative tradition.

The preface to the octavo editions position Roberts as the archetypal pirate, implying that the concept of the pirate-as-fellow is relevant to the whole text. The narrator exclusively identifies Roberts in the preface, commenting:

> being resolved not to weary the Reader, with tiresome Repetitions: When we found the Circumstances in Roberts’s Live, and other Pyrates, either as to pyratical Articles, or any Thing else, to be the same, we thought it best to give them but once, and chose Roberts’s Life for that Purpose.14

These prefatory remarks reinforce that the *General History* is a carefully constructed text, not a straightforward account of events. They position Roberts as a type that others either conform to or deviate from. By presenting the chapter as the comprehensive pirate narrative these editions suggests we should read Roberts as an archetype. Examining episodes that detail the text’s construction of fellowship, as well as the invocations of ‘fellow’ in this chapter, demonstrates that the archetypal pirate embodies the qualities of the worthy pirate fellow. It therefore follows that pirates are fellows, judged to be worthy (or not) by the standards established through Roberts.

Other editions position Roberts as one of the collection, rather than as an archetype. The prefaces to the abridgements highlight Avery, Teach, and Gow, while the compendium edition omits all prefatory comments. The abridgements substantially condense the Roberts chapter to align with the other chapters and omit this discussion of the ‘worthy fellow’. I argue that this contributes to the diminished profile of fellowship in the abridgements.

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Chapter Two

2.1.2 Other communal narratives include comparable concepts of the fellow

Dennis’s ‘worthy fellow’ is reminiscent of, and corresponds with, a phrase found in a medieval narrative of outlawry and homosociality. One of the earliest printed accounts of Robin Hood, *A Gest of Robyn Hode*, imagines the medieval outlaw and his community across a series of episodic narratives. No manuscript version exists, but researchers agree that it was probably in existence by 1450.\(^\text{15}\) Stephen Knight argues that this text differs from contemporary Robin Hood narratives because it has ‘an extended plot of some sophistication’ and belongs ‘to the medieval romance tradition of interlacing events and adventures’ (p. 74).

Literary iterations of Robin Hood are closely bound to ideas of leadership and communality. Hood is both a figure of popular legend dating from the fourteenth century and the central character in many ballads, plays, and prose narratives published between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries (p. 11 – 43). Knight argues that Robin Hood ‘narratives insist on communality, so much so that the highly personalised form of the novel has found it hard to handle this unindividualistic character’ (p. ix) Jeffrey Singman concurs that ‘the prominence accorded to Robin’s followers and diminished focus on Robin himself emphasize the community while downplaying the hierarchy’.\(^\text{16}\) Communality remains central across Robin Hood narratives. Knight suggests that while sixteenth-century iterations represent Hood as a kind of ‘social bandit’ who resisted ‘improper authority’, the seventeenth century saw the character gentrified and imagined as a dispossessed earl who steals from the rich to give to the poor.\(^\text{17}\) By the start of the eighteenth century a third Robin Hood emerged, in the criminal biography form. Despite these changes, his ‘merry men’ remain by his side.\(^\text{18}\) Therefore, Robin Hood is leader of a homosocial community regardless of his social standing.

*A Gest of Robyn Hode*’s imagining of ‘a gode felawe’ is relevant to my reading of the *General History*, despite the temporal distance between the two texts. First, the *Gest of Robyn Hode* is literary precursor that associates outlawry with fellowship as it depicts outlaws as fellows. Secondly, the *Gest of Robin Hode* can be approached as an early kind of adventure narrative. I explore ideas of adventure further in chapter three, noting here that both the *Gest of Robin Hode* and the *General History* are texts that concern the adventures of outlaws. Additionally,

\(^\text{15}\) Knight, *Robin Hood: A Complete Study*, pp. 45, 47.
\(^\text{18}\) A J Pollard notes: ‘In stanza 335 of the Gest, they are ‘his fayre mene’. In other places they are the merry men, not the merry meyn’ (A J Pollard, p. 142.). The OED notes that ‘merry man’ historically referred to ‘A companion-in-arms or follower of a knight, outlaw chief etc’ and that ‘in historical use most commonly associated with the English legend of Robin Hood’. It references instances of its use in c. 1390 in Chaucer and c. 1410 in Gamelyn, another medieval outlaw tale. (‘merry man, n.’ in *OED Online*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, March 2020)).
the 1734 compendium positions the legendary outlaw alongside the pirates of the *General History*. Hood appears reimagined as a highwayman in the same pages as the pirates that are this study's focus. Therefore, the figure of Robin Hood is a literary antecedent of the pirate and a contemporary analogue.

Being a ‘good fellow’ and recognising those qualities in others is an integral part of Hood’s homosocial community across iterations. Gillian Spraggs observes that Robin ‘himself has a reputation as a “good fellow”’ in medieval narratives like the *Gest of Robyn Hode* that ‘he is expected to live up to’.\(^{19}\) Scholars note that the *Gest of Robyn Hode* begins with an invocation that Robin’s men should be ‘good to women, ploughmen, yeomen, and any knight or squire ‘that would be a good felawe’\(^{20}\). The idea that Hood’s men themselves are good fellows is implicit in this invocation – as good fellows they can recognise when another reciprocates. Singman argues that the phrase reflects ‘good sportsmanship’, where knights and squires are good fellows ‘if they will be good sports and play along with the game by handing over the cash demanded of them’.\(^{21}\) In contrast, Spraggs argues ‘a good fellow […] was first and foremost a good friend or comrade’,\(^{22}\) She elaborates: ‘“Fellows” are comrades who have promised to be faithful in their dealings with each other, and who share everything they have’.\(^{23}\) Both readings emphasise loyalty and fairness. Providing a third perspective, Pollard contests readings by scholars like Colin Richmond, who imply that the phrase distinguished between good and bad members of the gentry.\(^{24}\) Instead, he argues that the term ‘fellow’ was never used in the medieval period to refer to gentry, and instead that ‘there are powerful reasons […] for supposing that a ‘gode felawe’ is one who was willing to serve truly under Robin Hood as one of his meyny, his fellowship of yeomen in arms’.\(^{25}\) Characters show themselves to be good fellows by submitting to Robin’s leadership, and subsuming themselves into the fellowship.\(^{26}\) The *Gest of Robyn Hode’s* ‘gode felawe’ and the *General History’s* worthy fellow promote similar accounts of communality and companionship. Across these two narratives outlawry is conceived as a communal endeavour of equals under the command of a charismatic leader.


\(^{21}\) Singman, p. 37.

\(^{22}\) Spraggs, p. 71.

\(^{23}\) Spraggs, p. 72.

\(^{24}\) Pollard references Richmond’s assertion that the knight ‘proves to be a “good chap”’ (A J Pollard, p. 241.) Richmond argues that the phrase distinguishes between knights that can be preyed upon and those that are ‘gode felawe[s]’. (Colin Richmond, ‘An Outlaw and Some Peasants: The Possible Significance of Robin Hood’, *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 37 (1993), 90–101 (p. 94.).)

\(^{25}\) A J Pollard, p. 143.

\(^{26}\) A J Pollard, p. 135.
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Robin Hood is individuated and terms connoting hierarchy replace the language of fellows in seventeenth-century iterations. Nevertheless, communality remains significant. According to Knight, Martin Parker’s 1632 ballad, ‘A True Tale of Robin Hood’, which was reprinted in 1668, 1700, and 1701, ‘was the first to cast the hero in a firmly individualistic mould’.27 Fellowship is not an appropriate term for the hierarchical relationship between Hood and his ‘merry men’ offered by Parker’s text.28 The ballad ‘recasts him as an aristocrat, “Robert, Earl of Huntington”’, an outlawed earl whose retinue joins him in the greenwood.29 The profile of Hood’s men is diminished, as they remain yeomen, while the outlaw leader becomes a hereditary leader. They are no longer his fellows because they are not his social equals. Instead, they are characterised as ‘lads’, a term that gestures towards youth and lower social status because it meant both a young man, and a serving man or attendant.30 Elsewhere they are called ‘his adventurous crew’ or ‘his followers’, and are thus his ‘dependant[s]’, ‘attendant[s]’ who exist ‘under [his] command’.31 Nevertheless, communality remains an important part of this narrative. Hood himself exhibits the characteristics of a ‘good fellow’, as he is ‘most kind’ to women, the poor, and the distressed.32 Likewise, when a Bishop summons a muster of men to stop him, his ‘Courtsey/so won the meaner sort’.33 This behaviour echoes that detailed in the opening of the Geste of Robyn Hode, which suggests that while hierarchy prevents Hood and his men being fellows, the notion of ‘a good fellow’ runs through the narrative. In other words, one can be a good fellow in outlaw texts, even as a fellowship is reconfigured into a retinue.

The Compleat History (1720) then re-imagines Robin and his companions as social equals. This narrative reverses earlier gentrification of the character by imagining Robin as the son of shepherds who:

associating himself with several Robbers and Out-Laws, as their captain, because he was a stout fellow, and would never entertain any in his Fraternity, before he had made sufficient Tryal of their Courage, and Dexterity in using their Weapons.34

Once again, this outlaw narrative modifies fellow to denote an exemplary member of the outlaw band. Members of this band must display courage and martial prowess. Robin is

27 Knight, Robin Hood: A Complete Study, p. 17.
Knight, Robin Hood: A Complete Study, p. 17.
29 Hanna, p. 212.
32 Parker, pp. 6–7.
33 Parker, p. 15.
34 Smith, A Compleat History, 3rd Vol.
leader of this association because he demonstrates these qualities. A stout fellow, by implication, must also show the same. The profile of the outlaw band is thus recuperated in this highwayman incarnation. These texts demonstrate how the display of communality is essential to representations of the legendary outlaw.

Being a ‘gode’/‘stout’ fellow is central in narratives where Robin Hood has equal social standing to his companions. These literary antecedents, the sustained use of the word ‘fellow’ throughout the General History, the specific assertion that the archetypal pirate is ‘A Fellow [...] worthy your esteem and favour’, and the consistent social position of the characters create the conditions where pirates can be characterised as a group of fellows on a ship.

2.1.3 ‘Fellowship’ is central to these marginal figures

The pun in the recognition that pirates are ‘fellows on a ship’ is not reason enough to justify my use of ‘fellowship’ to encompass the varied depictions of co-operation and homosociality in the General History. Nonetheless they are ‘fellows’ on a ship; therefore ‘fellowship’ is a reasonable collective noun to use. The text uses a number of terms including ‘allies’, ‘comrades’, ‘consorts’, ‘companions’, ‘confederates’ and ‘sworn friends’ to describe associations, while collectively they are ‘companion[ies]’, ‘crew[s]’ or ‘commonwealth[s]’. The use and meaning of these terms is unstable. Some, like ‘comrades’ and ‘companions,’ denote a specific kind of homosociality – in this case, members of the same crew. However, others, like ‘consort’, ‘confederate’, ‘ally’ and ‘company’, refer to a variety of associations. Collectively, these terms construct fellowship. I now turn to eighteenth-century approaches to ‘fellowship’, before examining selected literary representations, to support my use of this term to describe the General History’s depiction of homosociality and cooperation.35

‘Fellowship’ connotes co-operation, reciprocity, and joint enterprise. According to Elizabeth Archibald fellowship is ‘derived from the Old English “fēolaga” and the Old Norse “fēlagi” originally “one who lays down money or property in a joint undertaking” and is thus “a partner or associate”’.36 Archibald’s etymology highlights the importance of a collective investment that helps form a common bond. She demonstrates how, by the Middle Ages, ideas of communality became embedded in the definition of ‘fellowship’, where it referred to: ‘the spirit that binds companions together – charity, amity, camaraderie’ and ‘band of

35 ‘Brotherhood’ or ‘Companionship’ could have been used here. However, the General History uses ‘companion’ as one of a collection of terms, therefore ‘companionship’ more usefully describes specific relations, while brotherhood has familial associations that are only conveyed in the Misson chapter.
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associates, followers, fighting men, crew'.\(^{37}\) A term rooted in shared investment develops associations with a collective spirit in Archibald's account.

Connotations of co-operation and endeavour are also embedded in eighteenth-century uses. *Johnson's Dictionary*’s entry for ‘fellowship’ states:

1. companionship; consort; society
   
   This boy cannot tell what he would have,
   But kneels and holds up hands for fellowship. *Shak. Coriolan.*\(^{[...]}\)
   There is no man but God puts excellent things into his possession, to be used for the common good; for men are made for society and mutual fellowship. *Calamy’s Sermons.*\(^{[...]}\)

2. Association; confederacy; combination
   We would not die in that man’s company,
   That fears his fellowship to die with us. *Shakesp. Henry V.*
   Those laws do bind men absolutely, even as they are men, although they have never any settled fellowship, never any solemn agreement amongst themselves what to do, or not to do. *Hooker, b. i. s. 10.*\(^{[...]}\)

3. Equality

4. Partnership; joint interest
   Nearer acquainted, now I feel by proof
   That fellowship in pain divides not smart,
   Not lightens aught each man’s peculiar load. *Parad. Reg.*\(^{[...]}\)

5. Company; State of being together
   The great contention of the sea and skies
   Parted our fellowship. But hark, a sail! *Shakesp. Othello.*\(^{38}\)

The terms used by the *General History* to describe relationships between pirates appear across these selected entries. Moreover, these definitions articulate similar ideas to those generated in Archibald’s account. Fellowship retains its association with joint undertaking constituted as partnerships, while collective investment becomes implicit. The definitions emphasise that fellowship is more than physical proximity – equality, companionship, and social pleasure all connote notions of communality and fellow feeling.

The *General History’s* antecedents provide an additional rationale for using fellowship to describe an outlawed group. Singman and Pollard argue that fellowship is central to medieval imaginings of Robin Hood. Pollard observes that ‘Robin Hood’s band is described as a fellowship’ twice – first in *A Gest* when Robin summons his men, and secondly in *Robin Hood and the Potter*, where ‘the potter is offered fellowship’.\(^{39}\) Singman concurs that ‘the expression recurs frequently in the ballads’.\(^{40}\) Fellowship, then, is a term used explicitly in

\(^{37}\) Archibald, p. 311.

\(^{38}\) There are further definitions of fellowship in this entry – these refer to mathematical concepts, collegiate revenue sharing, and ‘social pleasure’. (‘Page View, Page 788’ in *A Dictionary of English Language: A Digital Edition of the 1755 Classic by Samuel Johnson* ed. by Brandi Beselke, <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/page-view/?i=787>\([Last modified: 6 December 2012].\)).

\(^{39}\) A J Pollard, p. 138.

\(^{40}\) Singman, p. 57.
medieval Robin Hood texts that resonates through later accounts. Singman further argues that the concept is ‘integral to the yeomen world of the outlaws’ (p. 36). He asserts that a fellowship is ‘a relationship in which loyalty and competition are inextricably linked’, relating fellowship to his conception of the ‘good fellow’ as a ‘good sport’ (p. 36 – 7). He suggests that fellowship heightens the role of the outlaw band: ‘where most medieval heroes are distinguished for their prowess, Robin’s personal abilities are more limited […] his success is more often owing to the assistance of his band’ (p. 37). In this reading literary fellowships elevate the members of the company. Pollard, in contrast, places emphasis on the resemblance between the outlaw fellowship and a military retinue. He references historical examples to argue that first and foremost ‘this fellowship is a band of armed men’. Together Singman and Pollard suggest that the key components of fellowship are a group of social equals with martial prowess who make a commitment of reciprocal loyalty to each other.

Consequently, fellowships represent an ideal of communal and homosocial behaviour. Pollard indicates that ‘the company of outlaws is modelled on an Arthurian Fellowship’; therefore ‘it is not surprising to find [that] King Arthur campaigned with a “felyship”, [and] addressed his companions in arms as “felowys”’ (p. 140). He suggests that ‘the character of the greenwood community is shaped by the model of the military retinue, or fellowships of this kind’. Similarly, Douglas Gray argues that ‘the brotherhood and amicitia of the knightly ideal finds a better expression in the “fellowship” of these “outcasts”’ (p. 141). In Gray’s view outlaw fellowship is more consistent with the spirit and standards articulated within early literary fellowships than the relationships shared by the Knights of the Round Table in romance narratives.

### 2.1.4 Fellowship is rooted in chivalric ideals

While knightly romance is predominantly a medieval genre, texts featuring Arthurian heroes circulated through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as ‘customers continued to supply a demand for a wide variety of Arthurian books in print’. Le Morte D’Arthur was published six times between 1485 and 1634, and was abridged into the eighteenth century. Malory’s text was read throughout the two centuries between its composition and the publication of the General History. Thus, it remained a key influential representation of fellowship into the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

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42 A J Pollard, p. 141.
44 Zeiders, p. 33.
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The form of these texts suggests continuity. *Morte D'arthur* weaves together the quests of multiple knights within an overarching narrative through the process of ‘interlacement’. Helen Cooper observes that:

> the knights who travel together in the interlaced romances form a pattern of constantly shifting companionships and alliances, each man having his own quest to follow or object to pursue that gives his adventures a different shape and meaning from those of his fellows.45

She argues that ‘a more complex kind of symmetry of structure can emerge in the romances that recount the quests of several knights in parallel – or more properly in interlace, since those adventures will typically coincide, digress, converge, overlap, and part company again’.46 The form of the *General History* similarly interlaces the narratives of companies under the overarching narrative of early eighteenth-century Anglo-American piracy. Companies appear in multiple narratives, continue across chapters, and diverge from one another. The *General History* does not just emerge from a particular moment in the long seventeenth century, but also contributes to a long literary tradition of interlaced narratives about homosocial relations.

Malory’s text ties fellowship and chivalry together. According to Archibald, the Round Table Knights are frequently described as a fellowship – ‘often it merely means ‘casual or temporary companionship [...] but in Malory the sense of loyal friendship and of an organized and permanent knightly order become increasingly important as his story develops’.47 It is primarily a literary construction. As Kevin Thomas Grimm observes, Malory’s version of fellowship ‘arises from both his knowledge of the French romances and his familiarity with the knightly groups, formal and informal, which flourished in the later Middle Ages’.48 These scholars argue that the text imagines an ideal of fellowship structured by chivalric behaviour.

Members of the Arthurian fellowship are social equals. Archibald observes that while Arthur is the head, the knights ‘are described, both by themselves and by the narrator as belonging to a collective body which is not to be identified with Arthur’s household, the “felyship” of the Round Table’.49 The fellowship does not derive its meaning and authority from the house of Arthur. According to Archibald, mutual admiration is a characteristic of fellowship in a chivalric context – fellowship between knights involves ‘the desire to keep company with a

46 Cooper, p. 63.
47 Archibald, p. 312.
49 Archibald, p. 313.
knight one admires and the bond thus created’. Grimm observes that Malory’s tale ‘stresses the fellowship that arises from appreciation for and emulation of gentleness’, Gentleness, and consideration for the honour of others is integral to knightly fellowship in Grimm’s reading.

The continuity in form between the General History and the Morte D’Arthur brings the moral atmosphere of the latter alongside that of the former. It raises the question of the extent to which the General History continues this moral atmosphere, and in what ways it parodies, inverts, or subverts it. The General History contrasts knightly fellowship with pirate communality. Specifically, the octavo iterations of ‘Of Capt. Bartho Roberts and his crew’ compare the pirates to knightly heroes in an episode the abridgements omit. The first octavo offers an ironic contrast voiced by the narrator, whereas the second imagines the moment as a sincere comparison made by the characters. Both editions begin with a successful attack on an under manned ship. They comment that ‘tho’ had [the crew] been all on Board, it was not likely the Case would have been otherwise’. The first octavo ironically explains:

for the most Part of them voluntarily join’d with the Pyrates, and there seem’d to be a general Disposition in the Sailors, towards them; and whenever they talk’d of them, it was with a great deal of Pleasure, commending their brave Actions, as if Robberies on the Sea, had been no more than Feats of Knight-Errantry; so that it was easy to perceive they wish’d them Success; and even some Soldiers, who were on Board the Ship, and were going as Recruits, to Cape-Coast-Castle, in the Company’s Service, were so possess’d with the gallantry of this life that they must needs offer themselves Volunteers.

The second octavo reframes the comparison:

the Sailors, most of them, voluntarily joyning the Pyrates, and encouraging the same Disposition in the Soldiers, (who were going Passengers with them to Cape-Corso-Castle) whose Ears being constantly tickled with the Feats and Gallantry of those Fellows, made them fancy, that to go, was only being bound on a Voyage of Knight Errantry (to relieve the Distress’d, and gather up Fame) and so they likewise offer’d themselves.

The use of ‘as if’ before the comparison between knight-errantry and robbery in the first octavo suggests the comparison to be laughable, the result of exaggerated talk by sailors who are inclined to turn pirate. The language suggests that the sailors romanticise robbery. The narrator of the second octavo has a similar ironic tone when they emphasise that the soldiers are mistaken in thinking that pirates ‘relieve the Distress’d, and gather up Fame’. However, a sincerity emerges from this episode that is not completely tempered by the ironic

50 Archibald, p. 319.
51 Grimm, p. 86.
intervention. The use of ‘Feats and Gallantry of those Fellows’ becomes key here. The phrase juxtaposes fellow, fellowship, and chivalry to suggest that the association is a sincere comparison made by the characters. The text’s representation of fellowship thus belies the intended irony. Therefore, the ironic narrator does not undermine my reading of the pirate as a new literary iteration of the adventurer hero. Rather, I suggest there is a tension between the narrator’s interventions and the text’s representation of fellows and fellowship.

2.1.5 Chivalric narratives justify the use of violence in the defence of honour

Violence and honour are tied together in the depiction of fellowship. As Pollard notes ‘Robin Hood is imbued with attitudes to violence that were shared by chivalric values’. He sees merit in Peter Coss’s suggestion ‘that they incorporate a parody of chivalric values’, but argues that some of the invocations of chivalry, particularly in relation to violence, are sincere. He suggests that fifteenth-century iterations of the Robin Hood tradition ‘are imbued with the same fundamental belief that the yeomen outlaws shared the right to practise violence, especially in the protection of honour, as did knights’ (p. 99). He suggests that this renders the violence enacted by Robin ‘not the incidental violence of common or garden crime, but the honourable and virtue defining violence of chivalry’ (p. 99). Both chivalric and outlaw fellowships turn to violence to defend what they call honour. Violence enacted by those in a fellowship is therefore tied to questions of honour, and what honour means within an outlaw group.

Bringing together the work of Shoemaker and Mackie suggests that eighteenth-century notions of masculinity have a close relationship with violence and outlaw figures. Shoemaker argues that ‘violence for men was part of accepted codes of masculine behaviour’ that ‘offered them a means of affirming their gender identity and gentlemen a means of confirming their superior social position’. Masculinity was accordingly framed around robust maintenance of one’s honour, and a defence against any perceived slight (p. 193). He suggests that ‘in conflicts with other men, men needed to demonstrate their courage, strength and independence by their willingness to fight’ (p. 194). Thus, eighteenth-century ideas of masculinity were bound to actual and potential violence. Mackie, meanwhile, suggests that eighteenth-century ideas of masculinity develop through licit and illicit figures. As I discussed in chapter one, she argues the pirate is one of a trio of criminal ‘culturally

55 A J Pollard, p. 95.
57 Mackie, p. 3.
prestigious masculine types’ that contribute to the development of the modern gentleman.\textsuperscript{58} Thus, in her reading, the juxtaposition of three violent figures, the highwayman, the pirate, the rake, with the gentleman was crucial in informing ideas of masculinity. Placing Shoemaker’s and Mackie’s analyses together suggests that normative notions of masculinity in the eighteenth century are tied to both violence and outlaw figures.

The \textit{General History} joins together these ideas in its complex juxtaposition of masculinity and violence. The text is in part a continuation of a literary tradition of outlaw fellowship that re-enact and re-frame chivalric values for non-genteel characters. However, it also partakes in normative ideas of masculinity in circulation at the start of the eighteenth century described by Shoemaker and Mackie. Chivalric and outlaw representations of violence and eighteenth-century ideas of masculinity both involve a particular relationship of violence to ideas of honour.

Alexander Welsh notes that ‘the very word honor’ is difficult to pin down ‘because it is now largely archaic and when still current had different, limited denotations’.\textsuperscript{59} Reputation and honour are often treated interchangeably; however, Welsh suggests that better ‘equivalent words’ might be ‘respect and self respect, or personal identity and meaningful identity’ (p. x). Welsh calls honour ‘the respect that motivates or constrains members of a peer group’ (p. xv). Honour is only significant within a community that judges whether actions or behaviour are honourable or dishonourable in relation to a set of standards. A fellowship is a type of peer group, one where ‘qualifications and membership are important: the group characteristically defines itself against those that are not in it’ (p. xvi). An outlaw group creates expectations of its members in its permutation of a chivalric fellowship. Ideas of honour are thus rooted in the narratives and constructions of cultures and communities, making them particularly literary notions.

\section{Pirate fellowships echo and exceed outlaw homosociality}

The pirates of the \textit{General History} cannot rely on modern systems of laws, regulation, and professional codes to discipline their relations because they are outlaws. Instead, they develop fellowships that bind members through a performance of older models of homosociality as depicted in medieval Robin Hood narratives and in knightly romance. The \textit{General History} offers ‘Of Captain Lowther and his Crew’ as the most detailed account of fellowship, both within and across companies. Similarly, Roberts is offered as the archetypal

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{58} Mackie, p. 5.
\end{flushleft}
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Pirate fellow. This model of fellowship and this depiction of the fellow are adapted and in places undermined across other chapters.

Selected chapters show the formation of fellowships, where characters mutiny, and declare their intention to abide by ‘Articles’. Pirates have no recourse to organise their communities beyond the bonds they form and the oaths they make. Their lack of recourse elevates the significance of the formal and informal mechanisms they use to solidify relations. Fellowship is essential aboard the pirate ship because the constitution of piracy makes trust in one another essential. Fellowship is consistently expressed across the octavo, compendium, and serialised editions, which is significant in and of itself within this text that varies extensively. However, variations in other editions influence the General History’s representation of the pirate as a literary type. This chapter demonstrates how the abridgements condense the text to omit elements that constitute fellowship in the longer versions. The pirate becomes a more individualistic type in abridged iterations.

This thesis reframes approaches to pirate communality by recognising the significance of fellowships within the General History. These fellowships closely resemble those established in fifteenth-century iterations of Robin Hood and in Malory’s knights. As a result, it argues that representations of homosociality engage with older models of masculine communality in an outlaw space.

The General History presents a model of relations where one’s word is valued, at a time where contract and regulations were beginning to dictate conduct and relations. And yet, this model of homosociality is undermined by the fact that fellowship is most present in moments when it is broken. The General History represents a series of homosocial communities bound by honour and oaths. Yet these are broken and challenged across multiple iterations of many of the chapters. This prompts the question of whether this is a satire of older models of communality, or a statement that these models are incompatible with a world where adventure and venture become increasingly commercial.

2.3 Editions vary the profile and significance of fellowship

The General History represents the inception of fellowship alongside the moment one becomes an outlaw. This is unusual in the depiction of outlaw fellowships. The fellowship of the Round Table, which forms within society, is created and secured through the annual repetition of ‘the Round Table oath’, where members swear loyalty to one another and to
Arthur. On the contrary, the formation of outlaw fellowship is obscured in Robin Hood narratives like *A Geste of Robyn Hode*. Both the community and their outlaw status are fully established at the beginning of the text. The *General History*, by contrast, opens chapters with this moment, fully exploring the inception of fellowship in the moment a collective is outlawed.

The *General History* represents fellowship forged in mutiny and secured by a set of codes called ‘The Articles’. It also conveys a wider sense of pirate communality in the fellowships formed between separate companies. In doing so the text emphasises the necessity of cooperation at sea, undermining accounts of the pirate as lawless and chaotic. The pirates of the *General History* create their own set of organisational principles that reimagine literary fellowships of earlier eras.

### 2.3.1 Fellowship is born when mutiny combines with a shared grievance

Mutiny is a key event for many pirate companies in the *General History*. Lincoln observes that historically ‘mutiny was often the precursor to piracy’; however, this correlation does not mean that most pirates were mutineers.Indeed, other scholars have suggested that historically mutiny was not the most common route into piracy. The majority of the pirates of the ‘golden age’ were former privateers or sailors whose ships were captured by pirates. Moreover, mutiny and piracy are separate acts and should be treated as such; the former does not inevitably lead to the latter. A crew could feasibly mutiny to remove an onerous captain, but otherwise continue with no change in purpose as N.A.M Rodger examples. However, the *General History* imagines a world where mutiny precedes piracy. Almost half of the captains represented in the first volume are either mutineers, or originate in mutinous companies.

Roger observes that in the eighteenth century mutiny could describe either ‘individual acts of violent insubordination of the sort which might more logically have been described as “striking an officer”’ or to describe ‘collective actions by whole ship’s companies which approach more nearly to the modern idea of mutiny, while remaining in many respects quite unlike it’ (p. 237 – 238). He argues that the latter type ‘were virtually unknown in the Navy,’ but that ‘discipline in merchant ships was generally slack, and mutinies or even murders

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60 Archibald, p. 317.  
61 Lincoln, p. 70.  
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were not infrequent’ (p. 238). Recognising that mutiny could mean a number of things in the eighteenth-century, I approach mutiny as ‘the violent seizure of a ship from her officers, on the high seas’ (p. 238) in this thesis.

Various iterations of ‘Of Captain Lowther and his Crew’ suggest that fellowships are founded when a collective share a grievance, develop a sense of fellow feeling for one another, and then mutiny. Fellowship is most stable in Lowther’s chapter, which remains fixed across octavo, compendium, and serialised editions despite significant changes elsewhere. However, abridged iterations diminish the profile of fellowship in this chapter, and consequently within the figure of the pirate as imagined by the text. The octavo and compendium editions depict an action motivated by the circumstances of a collective and the behaviour of their captain, whereas the abridgements ironically depict these complaints.

The octavo and compendium editions combine a collective grievance about the circumstances aboard a ship with an onerous captain, which creates the conditions for a mutiny rooted in fellow feeling. They begin with the complaints from a group of soldiers aboard the ship who ‘grew very impatient and disatisfy’d, especially Massey, who was very loud in his Complaints’ that he and his men are insufficiently victualed. These editions use reported speech to emphasise Massey’s concerns: ‘as he had the Care of so many of his Majesty’s Subjects, if they would not provide for them in a handsome Manner, he should take suitable Measures for the Preservation of so many of his Countrymen and Companions’. There is certainly an element of a leader’s obligation to his men in the notion that ‘he had the care of’ these soldiers, however, the closing description of them as ‘companions’ also suggests fellow feeling. These editions blame the insufficient victuals on the greed of merchants and the incompetence of the governor, who cannot control them. This opening thus establishes common grievance as foundation for mutinous action.

These editions also establish a grievance on the part of the sailors accompanying these soldiers. In this episode the captain of the ship takes ‘A pique’ against his first Mate, Lowther. However, Lowther ‘found Means to ingratiate himself into the good liking of the common Sailors,’ so ‘when Captain Russel order’d him to be punish’d, the Men took up Handspikes, and threatened to knock that Man down, that offered to lay hold of the Mate’. The men’s reactions signal the depth of bonds between Lowther and the crew, as they

65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
68 Ibid
directly oppose the authority of the captain to control discipline aboard the ship. This moment creates homosocial bonds, as it 'served but to widen the Differences between him and the Captain, and more firmly attach'd Lowther to the Ship's Company'.\footnote{Captain Charles Johnson, \textit{A General History, 1st Edition}, p. 267; Captain Charles Johnson, \textit{A General History, 2nd Edition}, p. 349; Captain Charles Johnson, \textit{A General History, Compendium Edition}, p. 262.} As a result, the crew become a collective positioned against their authoritarian captain.

Finally, fellow feeling develops between the two leaders of these groups. Lowther and Massey 'contracted an Intimacy' with one another that leads them to 'resolve upon Measures to curb the Power that controul'd them, and to provide for themselves after another Manner'.\footnote{Ibid} They decide to take control of their lives and support themselves when their commanders are either too ineffectual or too corrupt to do so.\footnote{Ibid} These two groups become fellows to one another, engendered by the relationship between their respective leaders, which enables them to plan a mutiny.

In contrast, the abridgements diminish the sense of fellowship conveyed through these characters and their actions. These editions use interjections and amendments to turn collective action into a personal grievance. The complaint about victuals is transformed into an individual’s problem with authority:

\begin{quote}
Massey finding he must be over-ruled by the Merchants, soon began to complain of their ill Treatment of his Men in their Allowance, saying he did not come to be a \textit{Guinea} Slave; and that if they did not use him and his Men better, he should take other Measures.\footnote{The History and Lives 1st Edition, pp. 114–15; The History and Lives 3rd Edition, pp. 88–89.}
\end{quote}

This quotation suggests that Massey is concerned about his position within the hierarchy of the garrison, and is pretending to be concerned for the men to obscure his motivations. It proposes that we read the calls for social justice ironically, as an individual’s desire for power and command, which contrasts with the seemingly sincere account of common grievance presented by the octavo and compendium editions.

The abridgements similarly diminish the sense of reciprocity between sailors. They begin with the same action, where ‘the sailors, who, upon the Captain’s going to punish [Lowther] swore, They would knock down the first man that should offer to lay hands on him’.\footnote{The History and Lives 1st Edition, pp. 115–16; The History and Lives 3rd Edition, p. 89.} However, this episode does not create a reciprocal relationship of close homosocial bonds. Instead, Lowther takes this ‘favour’ and ‘[improves it] to a general disaffection of the ship’s
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crew'. The abridgements present Lowther as a manipulator and beneficiary of affection, rather than a participant in a reciprocal relationship of fellows. Likewise, Lowther and Massey's accord is transformed from a resolution to seek freedom into an agreement to 'curb their Enemies, and provide for themselves some other way'. The use of 'enemies' here turns focus away from the collective circumstances, and transforms the mutiny into a personal vendetta between Massey and Lowther and their respective authority figures. Consequently, the abridgements reframe fellowship to emphasise individual perspectives and responses.

The octavo and compendium editions then develop the mutiny founded in common grievance and fellow feeling into fellowship when the company become pirates. In the wake of the mutiny Lowther dedares:

they had a good Ship under them, a parcel of brave Fellows in her, that it was not their Business to starve, or be made Slaves; and therefore, if they were all of his Mind, they should seek their Fortunes upon the Seas, as other Adventurers had done before them. They one and all came into the Measures.

These men are no longer sailors or soldiers, or even mutineers: they are now 'a parcel of brave fellows'. The modifier signals that the men have formed a collective identity, regardless of whether they were a sailor or soldier. The poor social and economic conditions of sailors established by the introduction are reiterated as their alternative path – they face starvation and slavery, according to Lowther, if they do not become pirates. Mutiny gives them the 'good ship', while fellowship has formed between this 'parcel of brave fellows'. These conditions create the opportunity to 'seek their fortunes upon the seas', to replicate the actions of 'other Adventurers'. Fortune and adventure are therefore tied together in this pirate fellowship, as piracy is imagined to be freedom and opportunity. Their fellowship is then secured when they:

knocked down the Cabins, made the Ship flush fore and aft, prepared black Colours, new named her the Delivery, having about 50 Hands and 16 Guns, and the following short Articles were drawn up, signed and sworn to upon the Bible.

They remove the signifiers of hierarchy by destroying the cabins and establish a set of rules, the Articles, which lay out the expected conduct of members of the fellowship. They affirm their commitment to the fellowship by signing and swearing to abide by these rules.

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75 Ibid.  
In contrast, the abridgements replace Lowther’s speech with a summary omitting the ideas of freedom and social mistreatment that amplify fellowship in other editions. The summary states: 'since they had a good ship under them, he proposed to seek their Fortunes upon the Seas, as others had done before them; which they all agreed too, calling the Ship, The Delivery, and swore to stand by one another'. Crucially, the abridgements omit the phrase ‘parcel of brave fellows’ and remove the references to slavery and starvation. Piracy is therefore constituted as an opportunity to ‘seek their fortunes’, not as an opportunity to escape oppression or degradation. Their action is not imagined as an adventure and these characters are not positioned as successors to a tradition of adventurers at sea. Instead, they echo the actions of others ‘before them’. They do, however, swear to stand together, showing a diminished, but not non-existent, notion of fellowship.

The General History also represents pirate communality through the depiction of fellowship formed between separate companies. These fellowships are agreed, rather than forged in mutiny. They are equally significant, as they indicate that the act of piracy creates a sense of commonality and community between those who rob upon the high seas. Communality therefore extends beyond the bonds of those who share a specific grievance.

The fellowship formed between the mutinying companies of Low and Lowther is the most representative of these relations. Low and Lowther’s fellowship is consistently depicted across multiple editions and is the most fully formed in the text. It extends beyond the boundaries of a single chapter, constructing fellowship as a connecting thread in this text, not a condition that exists in a single narrative. It gives a sense of wider pirate communality, particularly between companies that mutiny, and suggest that all fellowships involve some kind of agreement. The General History represents the Low/Lowther fellowship as a successful example, and as a model for the narratives that surround it.

Low and Lowther agree to sail as companions when they meet in ‘Of Captain Lowther and his Crew’:

Lowther received them as Friends, and treated them with all imaginable Respect, inviting them as they were few in Number, and in no extraordinary Condition to pursue the Account, (as they called it) to join their Strength together, which on the Consideration aforesaid, was accepted of.79

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The abridgements present a similar meeting: ‘Lowther received [Low’s company] as friends, inviting them, as they were few in number, to join their strength together’.\textsuperscript{80} Across editions the word ‘friends’ signals an affinity between the men founded in their shared occupation and/or identity as pirates. This friendship then develops into fellowship when the two groups actively agree to sail together through an invitation and acceptance. They combine their companies and form a fellowship aboard one ship.

The constitution of Low and Lowther’s fellowship amplifies the importance of formalised agreements and oaths across editions. In the first octavo ‘Of Captain Low and his Crew’ echoes the earlier chapter: ‘Low falls in Company with [Lowther], and after a Compliment, they join together, and go all aboard the same Vessel, which is already taken Notice of in the History of George Lowther’.\textsuperscript{81} The two companies informally develop a fellowship with one another in this moment. The abridgements meanwhile call attention to the lack of formalities: ‘they met with George Lowther, who took him under his Protection as an Ally, without any formal Treaty; which Lowe readily agreed to’.\textsuperscript{82} This version of the relationship is more paternal, about protection rather than fellowship. However, the second octavo adds formality and structure by mimicking the relations between sovereign nations:

[Low] falling in Company with George Lowther, another Pyrate there, who paying his Compliments to Low, as great Folks do to one another when they meet, and offering himself as an Ally; Low accepted of the Terms, and so the Treaty was presently sign’d without Plenipo’s or any other Formalities.\textsuperscript{83}

Their companionship is called a treaty, the one instance where this word is used in the text. The term ‘ally’ ties the idea of a treaty to the collection of terms that denotes fellowship across the text. The second octavo therefore renders the relationship between Low and Lowther more robust by mimicking the language used in negotiations of sovereign nations. Pirate ships are imagined as their own sovereign communities that can negotiate and enter into treaties with one another. Their outlaw community allows itself the impression of mechanisms used by legitimate forces. Pirates cannot turn to laws or regulations to solidify and regulate fellowships. Instead, this episode shows how they rely upon the mimicry of such mechanisms.

Across editions this company constructs a hierarchy that mimics naval organisation. Lowther and Low’s positions reflect their respective power upon the inception of their relationship in both incarnations of their meeting: ‘Lowther still continuing Commander, and Low was made Lieutenant; the Vessel the new Pyrates came out of, they sunk, and the Confederates proceed


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the Voyage as Lowther before intended’.\(^{84}\) The two men do not have the same status within the joint company, as the nature of pirate endeavour requires the collective to be led by one person. Over time the success of the combined company means they become a:

little Fleet, \textit{viz.} Admiral Lowther, in the \textit{Happy Delivery}, Captain Low, in the \textit{Rhode Island} Sloop, Captain Harris, (who was second Mate in the \textit{Greyhound} when taken,) in Hamilton’s Sloop, and the little Sloop formerly mentioned, serving as a Tender.\(^{85}\)

The abridgements similarly describe a hierarchy.\(^{86}\) This formally structured fellowship echoes conventional hierarchies as it spreads across multiple ships. The text takes the fellowship of equals under one leader expressed in chivalric and outlaw antecedents and expands it beyond a closed community. This expanded notion requires the performance and impression of extra reinforcing mechanisms as the fellowship extends beyond a single ship. Thus, hierarchy does not temper fellowship, but instead is a method of managing multiple shipboard collectives.

Other chapters of the \textit{General History} complicate my reading of the inception of fellowship, as they depict mutiny founded in predation. ‘Of Captain Howell Davis and his crew’ charts Davis’s repeated attempts to turn pirate. The first instance follows an encounter with Captain England, who orders Davis’s ship to ‘dispose of the lading to the best Advantage, and to make a fair and equal Dividend’.\(^{87}\) However, ‘to his great Surprize’ the majority of Davis’s crewmates are ‘altogether averse to it, wherefore in a Rage, he had them be damn’d’.\(^{88}\) This early episode suggests that he is not motivated by the condition of the company, or the rule of a bad leader, but is tempted by the prospect of material gain. This episode imagines mutiny as a means to acquire a ship to embark upon a pirate voyage. However, Davis’s crewmates turn him in. Across editions the would-be pirate is released without charge after a lengthy imprisonment and travels to Providence with the intent of joining a pirate crew, because ‘he could not expect any Employment’ where he was imprisoned.\(^{89}\) He instead joins a merchant crew where ‘the Lading of these Sloops was of considerable Value, consisting of European Goods […] many of the Hands on Board of them, were the Pyrates lately come in upon the late


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Act of Grace’. This section focuses on the goods aboard the ship, making the cargo their motivation, not the working conditions of the men. In this mutiny:

Davis having conspired with some others, [rose] in the Night, secured the Master and seized the Sloop; [...] they called to the other Sloop [...] and ordered them to come on Board of them; they did so, and the greatest Part of them agreed to join with Davis.

The men conspire to mutiny in a moment of collective action. However, they are motivated by the wealth aboard the ship. This fellowship is therefore conceived and established on the prospect of the goods that can be attained and the possibilities of future predation, not because of common grievance and fellow feeling.

The abridgements reframe these episodes, drawing back on the octavos’ inexorable account of a man determined to turn pirate. They add a key clause to Davis’s suggestion to the first company:

Thereupon Davis proposed to the Crew whether they were willing to follow England’s Commands, or run the Hazard of meeting with him again, and be killed. But to his Surprize, he found they were all for carrying the Ship to come Port or other. Then he bid them be damned, and go where they would.

This Davis is motivated by his fear of the pirate captain who made the initial ‘gift’, rather than the potential gains from the cargo. The abridgements then transform the second episode from a premeditated act into one of opportunity: ‘Davis goes on board one of [the merchant ships], with many of the Pirates who had accepted of the late Act of Grace. Finding the Sloops had rich lading they rose in the night-time’. The men discover the cargo is worth a significant sum, which causes them to mutiny. The collective action is expressed in far less detail, turning mutiny into a process by which men become pirates. The abridgements transform the straightforward quest for fortune offered in the octavos into a more nuanced account of fear and chance.

As this section demonstrates, the General History depicts the formation of fellowships. I suggest that what I call the fellowship chapter, ‘Of Captain Lowther and his Crew’, offers fellowship founded in common grievance, fellow feeling, and mutiny. However, the formation of other companies challenges the notion that fellowship is an act of communality. The General History introduces the idea of making ones fortune after the mutiny in Lowther’s

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chapter, whereas it brings fortune to the fore in the foundation of Davis's fellowship. Davis's chapter focuses on goods, and the prospective of material gain, not upon a common grievance about leadership or conditions. His mutiny is a moment where the values of fellowship from older texts make way for emerging concerns about piracy as an extreme form of commerce. In depicting the moment fellowships are founded the General History exposes the implicit assumptions of older outlaw fellowship narratives, and expresses a tension between the ideals of fellowship and a fellowship designed to make one's fortune. However, across chapters pirates also consistently affirm their mutual commitment to one another through formal mechanisms and their underlying oaths. Across editions pirate fellows are faithful to one another. These agreements therefore show the significance of fidelity and loyalty in the world constructed by the General History.

2.3.2 Pirate fellowships rely on oath making and the value of one’s word

The pirate ‘Articles’ is a formal document detailing commitments that echo those made by Robin Hood and his men. Rediker asserts that through the ‘Articles’ ‘crews allocated authority, distributed plunder, food and other resources, and enforced discipline’. They detail both the expectations of members and the obligations of the company to members. For example, in Roberts’ fellowship ‘Everyman has a vote in Affairs of Moment; has equal title to the Fresh Provisions, or Strong Liquors at any time seized’. The ‘Articles’ also outline some of the problems sailors faced, imagining a homosocial community committed to redressing common injustices at sea through egalitarian principles. These codes are tied to the fellowship, rather than the captain. They codify the need to submit to a person given the title and position of captain, not a specifically named character. The ‘Articles’ are documents regulating homosociality, not dictates from an individual in power. They suggest an ideal of social organisation aboard the ship.

The ‘Articles’ provide strict instructions for how plunder, the central concern of pirate activity, should be split across the fellowship. These instructions mandate an equitable rather than an equal split: ‘The Captain and Quarter-Master to receive two Shares of a Prize; the Master, Boatswain, and Gunner, one Share and a half, and other Officers, one and a Quarter’. Other crewmates receive a single share. The gradation of distribution reflects different levels of responsibility and technical skill. Roberts’ articles detail how if one member:

94 Rediker, Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age, p. 65.
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defrauded the Company to the Value of a Dollar, in Plate, Jewels, or Money, MAROONING was their Punishment. [...] If the Robbery was only between one another, they contented themselves with slitting the Ears and Nose of him that was Guilty, and set him on Shore, not in an uninhabited Place, but somewhere, where he was sure to encounter Hardships. (p. 230)

The articles of Captain Phillips, added in the second edition, convey a similar sentiment, that ‘If any Man shall steal any Thing in the Company, or game, to the Value of a Piece of Eight, he shall be maroon’d or shot’ (p. 398). This addition amplifies the principal that theft is one of the most egregious acts one can commit in these homosocial fellowships. Theft challenges the trust at the heart of the fellowship, so ejection from the community is the consequence whether one steals from the company or from an individual.

Rediker is less interested in the ‘Articles’ as mimicry of regulation and more interested in them as an anticipatory commitment to egalitarianism. He reads the ‘Articles’ offered by the General History as a sincere commitment to egalitarian principles that the pirates affirm through their actions. For example, he argues ‘in devising their shipboard social order pirates anticipated a modern idea that many consider one of the most humane of our times, creating their own social security system’. He interprets the ‘Articles’ as representations of radical social organisation, where the power of the captain is checked and balanced by the voice of the crew. Rediker’s reading interprets the language of the ‘Articles’ as a collective commitment to egalitarian principles that the pirates then practise.

Conversely, Richard Frohock questions the sincerity of these oaths, and argues that the framing of the ‘Articles’ renders them entirely ironic. According to Frohock, reading the ‘Articles’ in Roberts’s chapter without reference to the narrator’s interjections ‘[occludes] the satire that the narrator creates by putting the pirate's reported speech in direct dialogue with his own words’. He suggests that these interjections prove that the pirates fail to live up to the expectations they establish (p. 474). Consequently, these interjections ‘make the case that Roberts and his men treat their own laws not as inviolable principles or curbs on private will but rather look to them as creating spaces for wielding power’ (p. 474). In Frohock’s reading, the pirate’s word is insincere and their associations are rife with the irony of this insincerity.

By focusing on fellowship, I offer an alternative reading. I argue that the ‘Articles’ formalise the implicit promise of fellowship through the performative act of swearing and signing. They signify how pirate homosociality is rooted in an oath of fidelity. Across editions ‘Of Captain

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97 Rediker, Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age, p. 73.
99 Frohock, ‘Satire and Civil Governance in A General History of the Pyrates (1724, 1726)’, p. 482.
Davis and his Crew depict the solidification of the fellowship through this mechanism. These mutineers organise:

a Counsel of War [...] at which it was proposed to chuse a Commander; the election was soon over, for it fell upon Davis [...] As soon as he was possess’d of his Command, he drew up Articles, which were signed and sworn to by himself and the rest.  

The abridgements similarly assert ‘Davis was chosen Commander [...] This was no sooner done, but he drew up Articles, which were to be sworn to, and signed by everyone on board’. Davis is elected leader, and draws up the agreement that each member uses to signal their commitment to the fellowship, across editions. Each member makes a written and verbal pledge of commitment to one another, as well as their consent to Davis’s leadership. This ceremony transforms the ‘Articles’. They become both a set of rules, and a ceremonial object that signifies the centrality of oaths in the pirate commonwealth. In the absence of the rule of law, one’s word is the only thing pirates can rely on to maintain their homosocial community. The oaths that support pirate fellowships are predicated on the idea that one’s word has value.

Selected episodes in the second octavo suggest that violence, rather than a sincere commitment to homosociality, enforces the pirate’s oaths. The companies lead by Lowther and Roberts signal their sincerity by swearing upon the Bible, as was the custom in the eighteenth century. This suggests that their promises are supported by a mutual fear of sin as the consequence of breaking one’s word. However, ‘Of Captain Phillips and his Crew’ complicates our reading of oaths. Phillips and his companions ‘writ out the following Articles (which we have taken verbatim) and all swore to ‘em upon a Hatchet for want of a Bible’. This moment can be read as a satire of the fact that pirates take an oath – a weapon is a comical, perhaps even farcical, replacement for a holy book. An ironic reading suggests that pirates are brutes that see the Bible and hatchet as equivalent motivators for good behaviour. However, contextualising this addition with the notions of violence and fellowship explored in the introduction to this chapter frames this as another instance where violence is tied to the defence of honour. In this case it is the collective honour of the group. The use of the hatchet as a symbolic guarantor of fidelity demonstrates that pirate fellowship is based upon the threat of violence. Violence consolidates commitment, and is a consequence of that commitment. It is their only recourse when fellowships are fragmented, as they cannot turn to any other force to punish a broken oath, or to defend the fellowship against any outside

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force. Fellowships begin in an act of violence and are maintained through the threat of violence, through the pirate’s commitment to the hatchet.

The abridgements offer a contrast as they undermine and alter the representation of the ‘Articles’ and oaths conveyed in longer editions. These amendments begin with the abstract, which is repositioned and repurposed. In the octavos the abstract acts as a reification of the rule of law following a complex and, at times, sympathetic portrayal of pirates, whereas the abridgements’ abstract establishes the terms for judging piracy before the narrative begins. The idea that a pirate’s word has no value is central. The abridgements open with the declaration that ‘All Countries and Nations have ever made Laws against Pirates, looking upon them to be Hostes humani Generis, enemies of Mankind whom no oaths can bind’. It suggests that promises sworn by pirates cannot be trusted because they are ‘enemies of all’. The octavos, in contrast use the opening of the abstract to detail a state’s lack of obligations towards pirates. They establish that ‘A Pyrate is Hostis humanis generis, a common Enemy, with whom neither Faith nor Oath is to be kept, according to Tully’. While the abridgements suggest that pirates themselves cannot be bound by oaths, the octavos indicate that states are not bound by any oaths when pirates are involved. The former says that pirates cannot be trusted, while the latter indicates there is no need to act in good faith when dealing with pirates.

The 1729 abridgement adds a further episode undercutting the notion that the ‘Articles’ represent a sincere oath. In ‘The Life of John Upton, alias Hopton, a Pirate’ an unwilling hostage is threatened by the pirates who ‘swore That they would blow out his Brains if he did not sign their Articles immediately’. This individual does not willingly participate in the ritual that reifies fellowship. The crew ‘[insist] absolutely on his compliance, and then he called the captain to be a witness of his being forced: After all they satisfied themselves, saying, They would sign for him’. In this edition it is important that one’s name is listed on the ‘Articles,’ not that one makes a personal commitment signalled by signing and swearing them. The document then becomes a safeguard for the pirates, as one cannot turn a companion in without exposing oneself. Again, the abridgements make an amendment – in this case an addition, rather than an omission – that minimises elements of fellowship in its representation of the pirate.

Overall, the pirates of the *General History* make oaths of fidelity that echo those of their outlaw antecedents. Frohock argues that these oaths contribute to the ironies of the text. However, I read a sincerity in the text’s representation of the 'Articles' and oaths in the octavo and compendium editions that belies Frohock’s inexorably ironic reading of pirate governance. The ‘Articles’ represent the commitment of pirates to one another, and are thus about men, rather than governance. The pirates may bend or break the terms of the ‘Articles’; however, their oaths are maintained across many of the narratives of the *General History*. Reading these oaths and ‘Articles’ in the context of outlaw fellowship suggests that there is an incompatibility between how pirate fellows organise themselves and what the pirate fellowship sets out to do. Acquisition and predation clash with ideals of fellowship.

### 2.4 Fellowship, treachery, and bad fellows

The language used when pirates breach the terms of the fellowship exposes how fidelity is the core of pirate fellowship in the *General History*. The significance of treachery belies the narrator’s interventions, because if vows are without value they cannot be betrayed. To contrast, *A Gest of Robyn Hode* does not offer moments where homosociality is tested. Instead ‘the orderly nature and inherent solidarity for the forest group is consistent’,¹⁰⁷ According to Knight this text ‘does not include those tense moments of conflict found in the earliest ballads which both test and prove solidarity’.¹⁰⁸ The *General History*, meanwhile, depicts moments of crisis where pirate fellowships are betrayed. Several chapters use terms like ‘treachery’ and ‘betrayal’ when a fellowship is not formally dissolved. The values of loyalty and honour that underpin these fellowships are therefore brought to the surface in moments when they are challenged.

Fellowships should be formally dissolved in the *General History*. They require loyalty, regardless of dispute or disagreement, until all parties agree that the fellowship should end. This is most evident in the Low/Lowther fellowship. The first octavo describes the dissolution of their relationship: ‘old Differences reviv’d, and were much inflam’d by a bold hardy Fellow, *viz.* in short the Company was equally divided, 45 Hands went into the Brigatine last taken, where Low was made Commander, and Lowther pursued the Game’.¹⁰⁹

The second octavo adds further detail:

> At the taking of this Vessel, the Crews divided; for Low, whom Lowther joined at the Grand Caimanes, proving always a very unruly Member of the Commonwealth, always aspiring, and never satisfy’d with the Proceedings of the Commander; he

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thought it the safest Way to get rid of him, upon any Terms; and according to the Vote of the Company, they parted the Bear Skin between them: Low with 44 Hands went aboard the Brigantine, and Lowther with the same Number stay'd in the Sloop, and separated that very Night.¹¹⁰

Both octavos emphasise that neither attempts to cheat, challenge, or abandon the fellowship despite the discord between the two captains. The first octavo explains that ‘old differences’ end the fellowship, while the second octavo is more specific. It details how Lowther is displeased with Low’s conduct and the subsequent effect upon the ‘commonwealth’, while Low is dissatisfied with Lowther’s leadership. The use of ‘commonwealth’ reminds the reader that the crew extends beyond the two protagonists. The addition also shows the distribution of plunder in practice as the company splits the proceeds of their most recent acquisition, the bearskin. The distribution of plunder reiterates that while fellowship creates community, attaining plunder is its primary purpose.

The second octavo also emphasises consensus decision making by including a vote over the future of the company. It implies that the majority of the members must agree to the separation. The ‘Admiral’, Lowther, is not able to unilaterally end the fellowship despite his position. Across editions the two companies are evenly split, and part immediately. Dissolution marks the moment where cooperation and fidelity are no longer expected, where each newly formed company embark upon their own independent voyage with no obligation towards the other. These pirates avoid uncertainty by using specific mechanisms that manage relationships in the absence of external regulation.

The abridgements, in contrast, end the Low/Lowther fellowship with little detail: ‘at which time the crew divided, Low with 44 Hands went on board the Brigantine, and Lowther, with the same Number, staid in the Sloop’.¹¹¹ This iteration characterises the division as a further event in the narrative, rather than the split of an alliance. This is another instance where the abridgements continue to remove elements of fellowship from the pirate account, rendering the narratives more like criminal biographies in their focus on the individual.

The relationship between Low and Lowther, and their respective crews, offers the reader an example of a fully realised fellowship from start to end, against which we can measure other relationships. It demonstrates that fellowships are most stable when they are dissolved and the profits generated are distributed. After all, nobody can betray a fellowship that no longer exists. However, in other narratives the values of fellowship are most manifest in moments of crisis.

As I established earlier, Roberts is considered ‘a worthy fellow’, and his company is constituted as a continuation of Captain Davis’s fellowship. Their ‘Articles’ dictate the moment when the company can be dissolved: ‘No Man to talk of breaking up their Way of Living, till each had shared a 1000 l’. Yet ‘Of Captain Bartho Roberts and his crew’ features a number of episodes where pirate fellowship is broken by treachery. In the first episode Roberts leaves part of his company in command of a prize ship while his ship chases another. The seaborne party are stranded without supplies ‘thirty Leagues to Leeward and almost famished’. Roberts and his companions send for help from those left behind, but

Kennedy, who was Lieutenant, and left in Absence of Roberts, to Command the Privateer and Prize, was gone off with both. This was Mortification with a Vengeance, and you may imagine, they did not depart without some hard Speeches from those that were left, and had suffered by their Treachery. The text carefully distinguishes between treachery and piracy. The word ‘treachery’ is not used to describe mutiny or encounters with those outside the fellowship. Instead, the General History uses ‘treachery’ sparingly and specifically to describe the destruction of fellowships, when one party breaks one of the principles outlined above. The word is reserved for when pirates act against other pirates. Kennedy and his companions are treacherous on two counts: first, because they fail to support their fellows in need, and secondly, because they deny the rest of the fellowship their fair share of the plunder as they sever the relationship. Kennedy’s actions are particularly egregious as he is trusted to be a subordinate leader under Roberts’ authority, while the latter pursues a prize for the benefit of them all. The language used in this episode is consistent across the octavo and compendium editions, producing a consistent moment of crisis. In contrast, the abridgements remove any mention of Kennedy’s split with Roberts. This further diminishes the profile of fellowship and its associated values. Overall, the language of treachery used in the octavos and compendium highlights how the pirate fellowship is built upon the value of one’s word and expectations that a companion will be faithful in the General History. It emphasises the extent to which pirates must rely on promises and oaths, and makes treachery the highest infraction in its conceptualisation of homosocial relations. The language used in this episode suggests that betrayal is a moment of crisis, not the norm for these pirates.

The bigger a fellowship, the greater the chances of survival. Consequently, abandoning one’s fellows to their capture or death is also treachery. The octavo and compendium editions show

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this implicitly in instances where pirates evade capture through cooperation and explicitly when Low abandons his companions in the midst of battle. In this episode Low’s extended company become embroiled in a clash at sea after they attempt to take one of His Majesty’s Ships: ‘with a brisk Fire on both Sides, [...] the Ranger’s Main-Yard was shot down, and the Greyhound pressing close upon the disabled Sloop, Low, in the other, thought fit to bear away and leave his Consort a Sacrifice to his Enemy’.\(^{115}\) The octavo emphasises the relationship between these two ships through the use of ‘consort’. It shows that Low is aware of the consequences of his selfish actions by calling the abandoned sloop ‘a Sacrifice to his Enemy’. Those Low abandon ‘(seeing the Cowardice and Treachery of his Comcommander and Leader, having ten or twelve Men kill’d and wounded, and that there was no possibility of escaping,) called out for Quarters, and surrendered themselves to Justice’,\(^{116}\) The rarity of the word treachery in this text makes this use striking. The text does not construct a world where everyone is out for themselves, but instead creates communities where a lack of co-operation and commitment is harshly judged. These editions continue with a key sentiment placed in parenthesis: ‘had Low’s Sloop fought half so briskly as Harris’s did, and had stood as close to the Business, (as they were under a solemn Oath to do,) the Man of War could never have hurted them’.\(^{117}\) This is a moment where the text reiterates that the pirates have made an oath to defend one another with all of their capabilities. The display of martial prowess in defence of the community is central to successful fellowship. This episode reminds us that oaths are the foundation of pirate community, because they have no other mechanism to ensure fidelity. The reiteration of these values emphasises how fellowship is most manifest when broken.

The abridgements, by contrast, transform this episode into a moment of cowardice and personal failing, not a betrayal of fellowship. They omit the idea that Low leaves his companions as a ‘Sacrifice to his Enemy’; instead ‘the fight was renewed with brisk fire on both sides, till the Ranger’s main-yard was shot down; upon which, the Greyhound pressing close, Lowe, in the other, bore away, and left his consort’.\(^ {118}\) The abridgements then eliminate the word ‘treachery’ in the response of those abandoned: ‘seeing the cowardice of his Comcommander, and that there was no possibility of escaping, called out for quarters’.\(^ {119}\) Finally, they remove the parenthesis noting the oaths between the two ships: ‘for had he fought half


\(^{117}\) Ibid.


\(^{119}\) Ibid.
so briskly as Harris, the Man of War could never have taken either of them’. The abridgements minimise the collective, thereby amplifying the implications for individual character and further rendering the pirate as an individualist figure.

2.4.1 Selected captains are bad fellows

The significance of fellowship is more evident when pirates are bad fellows. ‘Of Captain Avery and his Crew’ consistently depicts bad fellowship across editions, save for the abridgements. This chapter is self-consciously constructed as a corrective to the myth that flourished after Avery’s capture of the Ganj-i-sawai, ‘in which Avery becomes not only a pirate, but the governor of his own kingdom’. The narrator specifically positions the General History’s account as the ‘true’ story, claiming that other stories ‘were no more than false Rumours […] No Doubt, but the Reader will have a Curiosity of knowing what became of this Man, and what, were the true Grounds of so many false Reports, concerning him’. The narrative begins by refuting prior accounts, suggesting that we should read Avery’s iteration of the pirate captain differently to other captains in the text. Burwick and Powell place this chapter within a broader ‘Avery backlash that began in the 1720’s’, which ‘may have been a response to the aggrandizement’ of him in the 1700’s and 1710’s. Meanwhile, Stephanie Jones argues that this chapter is presented as both a corrective of the prevailing myth of Avery and as a counter to the narratives that follow. She argues that by presenting Avery as ‘a greedy egomaniac, the founder of a draconian monarchy doomed to failure’ the General History ‘structures Every’s story as an authenticating counterpoint to the story of the entirely fictional Misson’. I build upon Jones’s analysis to develop a new approach to Avery. I argue that fellowship is key to the pirate of the octavos and the compendium from this opening chapter, and that this narrative counters those that follow because it comprehensively depicts a bad fellow.

The abridgements, by contrast, mediate between the octavo’s bad fellow and the Avery myth. These editions omit the narrator’s initial intervention. Instead, the chapter follows the conventions of criminal biography by describing Avery’s parents, his childhood, and a series of escalating misadventures that end with him aboard the Duke. While the Avery of the octavo and compendium editions never makes it to Madagascar, the abridgements’ Avery

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121 Burwick and Powell, p. 29.
123 Burwick and Powell, p. 29.
124 Jones, p. 75.
125 Ibid.
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lands and builds a community.\textsuperscript{127} In this new settlement Avery ‘began to form a Society, and made several Degrees of Officers under him, as if he had been a Sovereign’.\textsuperscript{128} However, unlike the myth, he does not remain ruler of the island settlement. Instead, like the octavo and compendium version, he dies penniless in Devon, cheated by a merchant he swears ‘was a greater Pirate than himself’.\textsuperscript{129} The abridgements embed signals of bad fellowship within a wider narrative that minimises communality.

Fellowship is a key quality from the beginning of the Avery chapter in the octavo and compendium editions. The narrative begins when Avery ‘insinuated himself into the good Will of several of the boldest Fellows’ then ‘at length proposed to them, to run away with the Ship, telling them what great Wealth was to be had upon the Coasts of \textit{India}'.\textsuperscript{130} This crew is not mistreated. Their captain is not cruel, nor does he deny them victuals – his only fault is that he is a drunk.\textsuperscript{131} Instead, making a fortune precipitates mutinous action, echoing Davis’s mutiny explored above. In contrast, the abridgements remove the language of fellowship and the idea of collectively making a fortune. This Avery joins the Ship:

\begin{quote}
where he had not been long before he observed the Captain was much addicted to drunkenness. He endeavoured to spirit up, not only his own ship’s crew, but having given the word to Part of the other ship’s crew, the conspirators gave the signal.\textsuperscript{132}
\end{quote}

His actions are framed as an impulsive response to an opportunity afforded by poor leadership. Consequently, a charismatic leader exploits a weakness in a hierarchical system. The octavos and compendium privilege premeditation and personal acquisition, while the abridgements focus on impulsive opportunism. Crucially, neither version of Avery's mutiny mentions any unreasonable circumstances.

Furthermore, the octavo and compendium editions imply a tension between Avery’s individualism and the language of fellowship he deploys. In a monologue to his captain Avery declares:

\begin{quote}
You must know, that I am Captain of this Ship now, and this is my Cabin, therefore you must walk out; I am bound to Madagascar, with a Design of making my own Fortune, and that of all the brave Fellows joined with me.\textsuperscript{133}
\end{quote}

Avery separates himself from his crew by taking the captain's cabin for himself, whereas other narratives break down this separation by taking down cabins.\textsuperscript{134} Crucially, the

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
pronouns used by Avery contradict the performance of fellowship expressed in the use of ‘brave fellows’. Avery's language elevates him above his companions: ‘I am Captain’, ‘this is my cabin’, ‘I am bound’.135 There is no ‘we’ in Avery's mutiny, merely Avery and the men who follow him, even as they are called his fellows. In this moment the ‘I’ is privileged in a way that it is not in other chapters, which do not offer direct speech between mutineers and those they mutiny against. Avery reveals his priorities by not using collective pronouns, even as he gestures towards fellowship.

The tension between ideals of fellowship and Avery’s performance is amplified when Avery’s company allies with two other ships. While ‘the Sloops Men were rejoiced at the new Ally’, Avery’s perspective eschews the language of fellowship, instead calling them: ‘this Reinforcement’.136 Avery’s insincerity is amplified as the narrator foreshadows that ‘tho’ the Booty must be lessened to each, by being divided into so many Shares, yet he found out an Expedient not to suffer by it himself as shall be shewn in its Place’.137 Avery's bad fellowship is signalled in both his mutiny and in this formal fellowship. He deploys the signifiers of fellowship, yet concurrent language signals an undercurrent of individualism realised across the rest of the chapter.

The abridgements, meanwhile, omit the language of fellowship in this episode:

Be not frightened, saith Avery, and I’ll tell you. You must note, I am now Captain of this ship; nay you must turn out for this is my Cabin and I am bound to Madagascar to make my own Fortune as well as my Companions.138

The personal pronouns signal Avery’s self-positioning, while his companions are placed as an afterthought. This interaction finishes with the declaration that Avery’s fortune is a priority, while the benefit for others is secondary. Similarly, when Avery agrees to sail with the two additional ships he ‘promis’d them Protection’, and therefore offers safety, not fellowship.139 The less penetrating account of fellowship constructed by the abridgements does not contrast ideas of fellowship and Avery’s individualism. Rather, Avery’s narrative initiates a shift in the profile of fellowship in the abridgements, which sees the pirate not as a fellow but as an individual who resembles the protagonists of criminal biographies.

The octavos and compendium deploy ideas of treachery to amplify Avery's bad fellowship. The three ships successfully attack and plunder ‘rich Habits and Jewels, with Vessel of Gold
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and Silver, and great Sums of Money’ from the Ganj-i-sawai. Avery then convinces his crew to cheat their companions:

telling them they now had sufficient to make them all easy: and what should hinder them from going to some Country, where they were not known, and living on Shore all the rest of their Days in Plenty; they understood what he meant: in short, they all agreed to bilk their new Allies.

The text is clear that this is a knowing attempt to betray allies by stealing the proceeds of their collective action. As I note above, the equitable distribution of plunder is a key component of fellowship. Avery demonstrates his failings as a fellow by tricking his allies out of their share. The narrator further amplifies the sense of bad fellowship: ‘nor do I find that any of them felt any Qualms of Honour, rising in his Stomach, to hinder them from consenting to this Piece of Treachery’. His interjection deploys the language of betrayal used across the text to emphasise Avery's lack of honour.

Betrayal then becomes a central theme of Avery’s chapter. After betraying his allies he goes on to ‘[conceal] the greatest Part of the Diamonds from’ his crew to trick them out of their share. Merchants in Bristol subsequently cheat Avery when he tries to sell these diamonds, thereby offering a key trope of criminal biography: the ‘biter gets bit’. In constructing a narrative designed to undermine the Avery myth the General History also depicts a bad fellow who is justly punished for breaking his word. Thus, this chapter depicts bad fellowship as a counter to the good fellowship expressed elsewhere.

The abridgements frame Avery as a mock king, rather than a bad fellow. They omit references to treachery in their description of Avery's manipulations:

by telling them, that they had nothing to fear, the Treasure now in their won Hands; and that if they would stand by him, he did not doubt but to order it so as to cheat the Sloops [sic] crew of their part, but also to make them subservient to them in their new intended settlement [...] for having secured the Men and Sloops, he strengthned his Alliance, and was hereby prepared against any Thing the others could offer.

This moment allows Avery to strengthen his relationship with those aboard his ship, which in turn strengthens his position in the new settlement. The ability to successfully cheat their companions enables Avery and his crew to establish dominance over their allies. The

abridgements therefore create an Avery concerned with fealty and personal relations by mediating the Avery myth and the octavo iterations. He continues the deception as they establish a settlement: ‘As fast as they got ashore Avery put them to work upon his new Fortifications; and if any of them began to talk of a Division of the Treasure, he told them they had not Time at present’.146 Avery’s influence upon his crew is so pervasive ‘that when two of the Mates began only to murmur, they were both hung up at the mast to frighten others from such attempts’.147 The pirate company then develops a hierarchy that solidifies Avery’s charismatic leadership of the group. Their hierarchy is entrenched as he ‘made several degrees of officer under him, as if he had been a Sovereign’.148 This creates a middle layer of social organisation that distances Avery from the common seamen. The whole society is structured around one character’s leadership and personal desires. Advancement is based on Avery’s preference of ‘those that he judged most in his interest’ not on the good of the collective or any kind of homosociality.149 Avery positions himself as a king, not the leader of a fellowship.

The *General History* follows Avery’s bad fellow with similar moments across other chapters in the octavo and compendium editions. These iterations rarely emphasise performances of good conduct and fellowship. Instead, the importance of good fellowship is highlighted in the consequences of, and language used in, episodes where a pirate is a bad fellow. There are significant variations in the first and second octavos; nevertheless, both suggest that bad fellowship destabilises the bonds between pirates and is caused by some form of dispute over plunder.

The first octavo offers selected episodes where Roberts fails to live up to the standards expected of him as a ‘worthy fellow’. First, it describes how: ‘the Brigantine who had hitherto lived with them, in all amicable Correspondence, and of whom they had no Mistrust, thought fit to take the Opportunity of a dark Night and leave the Commodore’.150 This moment echoes Kennedy’s betrayal, discussed above. Both splinter groups run away surreptitiously, taking a ship. However, Kennedy’s behaviour is a betrayal, while this action is neutrally called ‘the Separation of Bradley’.151

Roberts’ treatment of his fellows initiates this shift in language. The separation is:

> occasioned it’s thought from the Haughty and Magisterial Behaviour of Roberts towards them, who regarded the Brigantine only as a Tender, and as such left them

147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
149 Ibid.

111
no more than the Refuse of their Plunder; however, he put on a Face of Unconcern, at this his ill Conduct and Mismanagement.\textsuperscript{152}

By displaying ‘Haughty and Magisterial Behaviour’ Roberts does not act like the ‘worthy fellow’ Dennis declares him to be. Instead, he displays bad fellowship by refusing to acknowledge the Brigantine’s crew as equals. By treating them as a ‘tender’ he affords them the status of a minor ship in service to the main ship, rather than a pirate ship in its own right. Crucially, he denies them their fair share of the plunder; an act the text calls ‘ill Conduct and Mismanagement’. Disputes over plunder repeatedly feature in moments of broken fellowship. In this instance an equal share of the plunder is one benefit allowed by the ‘Articles’. As Roberts fails to afford the Brigantine’s crew these benefits, they are not obligated to reciprocate with good fellowship. Bradley and his companions do not betray the company because Roberts has already broken the fellowship.

The second octavo rewrites this episode, by replacing Bradley with Captain Anstis and adding extra detail. This change shifts the status of the captain, but for present purposes what is crucial is that the heart of this episode is consistent even as the detail changes. Anstis’s complaints are identical to Bradley’s: ‘What made \textit{Anstis} a Malecontent, was, the Inferiority he stood in, with Respect to \textit{Roberts}’.\textsuperscript{153} Roberts’ treatment of the Brigantine ultimately causes the split. Both the first and second octavos emphasis that covertly splitting a company is not a betrayal when good fellowship is not practised by all members.

In contrast, the abridgements focus on the individuals involved. They condense the second octavo’s iteration, calling it ‘an Accident that happened at the West Indies, which had like to have ruined all, and was the occasion of the Brigantine’s going off’.\textsuperscript{154} It describes an altercation between Roberts and a crewmember named Brag, which causes Brag and his companions to ‘[conspire] with \textit{Anstis}, Captain of the Brigantine, who also a Malecontent on account of \textit{Roberts’s} Haughty Carriage towards him’.\textsuperscript{155} The phrasing of this episode transforms a display of bad fellowship into a conflict of personalities. In pointing exclusively to ‘Robert’s Haughty Carriage towards’ Anstis the abridgements tie the two grievances together to make the separation personal. It suggests that Roberts’ behaviour to the captain of the subordinate sloop causes the split, rather than his treatment of all those aboard the secondary ship. In the absence of an overarching account of fellowship and without Kennedy’s betrayal this moment becomes a warning about the excess of the captain, rather

than a contrasting episode that demonstrates how captains are also subject to the expectations of good fellowship.

Conversely, Vane's display of bad fellowship in the octavos and compendium surfaces the importance of respect as a marker of one's qualities as a pirate. These editions describe how Vane's consort, Yeats, 'slip'd his Cable and put his Vessel under Sail' which provoked Vane to get 'his Sloop under Sail to chase his Consort, who he plainly perceived, had a Mind to have no further Affairs with him. These editions eschew terms connoting betrayal. Instead, the phrase 'have no further Affairs with him' offers a more neutral assessment. This is because Vane's display of bad fellowship destabilises their relationship:

having always treated his Consort with very little Respect, assuming a Superiority over Yeats and his small Crew, and regarding the Vessel but as a Tender to his own; gave them a Disgust, who thought themselves as good Pyrates and as great Rogues as the best of them; so they caball'd together, and resolved to take the first Opportunity to leave the Company; and accept his Majesty's Pardon, or set up for themselves, either of which the thought more honourable than to be Servants to the former.

Once again, fellowship is disrupted by the conduct of the captain, rather than by the treachery of the crew. This idea is further explored through the articulation that the splinter group 'thought themselves as good Pyrates and as great Rogues'. First, this phrase gestures to a division between ideas of the pirate and ideas of the rogue, as they call themselves 'good Pyrates' and 'great Rogues', which further develops ideas discussed in chapter one. Secondly, it suggests that one's position within the fellowship confirms one's status as a pirate. If a ship is treated as a tender, then the members are not pirates, but are in service of pirates. In not treating Yeats and his crew as fellows Vane suggests that they are not 'as good Pyrates' as the rest. This suggests that pirates are fellows, and fellows are pirates.

The abridgements condense this moment to emphasise incivility, not bad fellowship. They note how:

Vane having always treated his consort Yeats and his crew rudely, and as only a Tender to him, displeased him in such a manner, that he resolved to take the first opportunity to leave Vane, and accept his Majesty's Pardon.

In the octavos and compendium Vane's behaviour is disrespectful, while in the abridgements he treats them 'rudely'. While the two terms broadly convey the same sentiment, particularly when placed in conjunction with the notion of a tender ship, they have slightly different implications for pirate relations. To treat someone rudely is to behave 'in a rude manner',

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‘without exactness; without nicety; coarsely’, or ‘violently; boisterously’, while to treat someone without respect is to have no ‘regard; attention’ or ‘reverence; honour’ for them.\textsuperscript{159} The former connotes general incivility and unmannered behaviour, while the latter suggests ideas of fellowship and honour that are crucial to the octavos’ figuring of the pirate.

Crucially, the abridgements remove the invocation of honour, which the octavo editions contrast to being ‘servants’. While this episode demonstrates the centrality of conduct in determining who breaks apart a fellowship, it also has clear implications for how honour is constructed in the octavos and compendium. Homosocial groups in pirate, outlaw, and knightly narratives build their own conceptualisation of the highly literary notion of honour. Honour in the \textit{General History} is constructed entirely by the pirates, in a way that is contextual and self-contained within their fellowship.

The \textit{General History} constructs a homosocial society structured by adherence to a set of rules and expectations that are founded in loyalty, trust, and respect. These companies are not anarchic and lawless. The text emphasises communality through the pirate as a fellow, and constructs homosocial communities that look back to older models of male fellowships. However, fellowship is most manifest when it is broken either by treachery or bad fellowship. Contention frequently occurs over the distribution of plunder, suggesting a tension between the ideals of fellowship and the primary purpose of pirate fellowships – redirecting commerce for the benefit of the pirates. Consequently, the \textit{General History} indicates an incompatibility between the values of fellowship and the eighteenth-century's developing world of commerce when it depicts fellowships and fellows that privilege making one’s fortune.

2.5 Fellowship, the gang, and the individual highwayman

Faller argues that ‘the idea of outlaws organised into societies of their own (or rather antisocieties) was not so attractive to the eighteenth century as it had been, and would be to other eras’\textsuperscript{160} However, my reading of the \textit{General History} suggests that outlaw communality was not unattractive to readers. Rather, the representation of outlaw communality shifted from the land to the pirate ship.


\textsuperscript{160} Faller, \textit{Turned to Account}, p. 179.
One of the biggest contrasts between the figures of the pirate and the highwayman is that neither circumstance nor necessity require the highwayman to be communal. As Faller argues ‘highwaymen typically were shown acting as lone gunmen, it would seem, because they were at their most attractive and most entertaining when they stood outside all body politic’. The space literary highwaymen inhabit and the targets they pursue allow them to work alone, with only a horse for a quick getaway.

This is not to say that depictions of highwaymen eschew the representation of homosocial bands. While many of the highwaymen in the History of Highwaymen operate individually or in partnerships, a small number steal in homosocial groups. However, the profile of homosociality is diminished in the General History’s highwaymen. These amended narratives instead privilege individual protagonists. The compendium also reimagines Hood and Falstaff to minimise the impact of the gang. This creates an edition where the eighteenth-century highwayman is an individual and the communality of the medieval outlaw is diminished, while the pirate fellowships I explore above remain intact. This contrast suggests that pirates invoke a moral environment of fellowship and honour found in earlier accounts of homosociality that is absent from contiguous narratives of highwaymen. The extent to which fellowship is represented in these texts becomes a key distinction between the pirate and the highwayman.

Fellowship and the ‘gang’ are distinct yet overlapping concepts. The OED defines gang as ‘a group or band of people who go around together, or associate with one another regularly, a number of people joined together by a shared interest or common cause’. A gang is characterised by ‘shared interest’ rather than by a common identity or shared traits – it is transitional and rooted in actions rather than identity. Samuel Johnson’s Dictionary meanwhile defines gang as ‘a number herding together; a troop; a company; a tribe; a herd’. The Dictionary notes ‘it is seldom used but in contempt or abhorrence’ and quotes the Merry Wives of Windsor (‘There’s a knot, a gang, a pack, a conspiracy against me’) and Fable 21 of L’Estrange (‘a gang of thieves were robbing a house’) to emphasise the illicit associations the word ‘gang’ has.

The 1734 General History surrounds pirate fellowships with individualised lone highwaymen drawn from the History of Highwaymen. As Faller observes:

161 Faller, Turned to Account, p. 179.
though Hind, Whitney, Old Mobb and the Golden Farmer (to name just four of the most fabulous highwaymen) were all members of large gangs, and though this was well known, at least in their own life times, their biographies typically show them robbing alone.\footnote{Faller, \emph{Turned to Account}, p. 178.}

Following Faller, I select the latter two characters as representative examples of the highwayman. These chapters are dispersed through the 1734 edition but nevertheless remain typical of the highwayman in this text. Across the \emph{History of Highwaymen} and the \emph{General History} the Golden Farmer 'generally robbed alone'.\footnote{Captain Charles Johnson, \emph{A General History, Compendium Edition}, p. 106.} Similarly, in the compendium 'for the space of five and forty Years' Old Mobb was a highwayman 'during which time it was reported he never acted in any company, except now and then a little with the Golden Farmer', while in The \emph{History of Highwaymen} he robbed: 'never in any Company, excepting sometimes with the Golden Farmer'.\footnote{Captain Alexander Smith, \emph{The History of the Lives of the Most Noted Highway-Men, Foot-Pads, House-Breakers, Shop-Lifts, and Cheats, of Both Sexes, in and about London, and Other Places of Great Britain, for above Fifty Years Last Past.}, 2nd edn (London: J Morphew and A Dodd, 1714), p. 16.} Neither account depicts collective action; any companionship is temporary. Old Mobb and the Golden Farmer represent the highwayman as an effective and independent thief.

The 1734 \emph{General History} reworks other accounts to augment the individualised highwayman. The text side-lines Claude du Vall’s occasional companions to make him the sole focus. His companions become additions to his endeavour: 'he takes four or five of them along with him, and overtakes [a coach] on the road' whereas in the \emph{History of Highwaymen} 'with his squadron, [he] overtakes a coach'.\footnote{Captain Charles Johnson, \emph{A General History, Compendium Edition}, p. 150; Captain Alexander Smith, \emph{The History of the Lives of the Most Noted Highway-Men, Foot-Pads, House-Breakers, Shop-Lifts, and Cheats, of Both Sexes, in and about London, and Other Places of Great Britain, for above Fifty Years Last Past.}, 2nd edn (London: J Morphew and A Dodd, 1714), p. 91.} The compendium denies them a cohesive identity by making them individuals that have been 'taken along', while Smith's text uses the term 'squadron' to imply a group identity associated with the military. In both instances du Vall is central to the encounter, while the collective disappear unless invoked as a threat.

The compendium rewrites an episode from the \emph{History of Highwaymen} to amplify civility in the highwayman protagonist, thereby imagining theft as an act that apes the honour and virtues of the gentleman. It details how ‘Du Vall with some of his companions were patrolling upon Blackheath’ when they encounter a coach.\footnote{Captain Charles Johnson, \emph{A General History, Compendium Edition}, p. 91.} One of the robbers ‘[robs] them very rudely, taking away their Money, Watches, Rings, and even the poor Baby’s Sucking-Bottle’ (p. 91). Du Vall intervenes when the robber ignores the women’s pleas:

\begin{quote}

\end{quote}
Du Vall threatened to shoot his Companion, unless he restored what they required, adding these words; Sirrah, can't you behave like a Gentleman and raise a Contribution without stripping People, but perhaps you had some Occasion for the sucking Bottle; for your Actions one would imagine, you were badly weaned. This sharp Reproof had the desired Effect, and Du Vall took his Leave of the Ladies in a courteous Manner. (p. 92)

The text uses one of the robbers to demonstrate du Vall’s civility. The use of ‘gentleman’ here creates an expectation that the highwayman will act civilly. While the Geste of Robyn Hode’s protagonist would never steal from a woman, the highwayman steals from her with courtesy. This moment depicts an association of convenience – du Vall has to threaten the other robber because he does not have authority as their leader. In comparison the History of Highwaymen attributes the theft and cruelty to du Vall who:

robs them rudely, take away their Money, Watches, Rings, and even the little Child’s sucking-bottle; nor would, upon the Child’s Tears, not the Ladies earnest Intercession, be wrought upon to restore it ‘till at last, one of his Companions forc’d him to deliver it.  

Du Vall’s companion acts the gentleman, while the protagonist is cruel to a child. The intercession reminds the reader that du Vall is accompanied by others, and allows his companion the agency to impose upon the protagonist.

The General History’s construction of the highwayman as a solo figure is amplified in its depiction of medieval robbers. Hood and Falstaff are embedded in gangs; however, the profile of the gang is diminished, while the protagonists are individuated. As the introduction to this chapter discusses, Hood’s leadership of the outlaw gang remains an important thread within the Robin Hood tradition, even when he is reimagined as ‘a highwayman and a murderer’ in the History of Highwaymen. However, Hood is unmoored from the communality that defines the figure in earlier iterations when placed alongside the homosocial figure of the pirate in the 1734 compendium. The General History describes how Hood:

Associating himself with several Robbers and Outlaws, put himself at their Head, because he was a Man of extraordinary Courage, and wou’d never entertain any in his Fraternity, but such as had been sufficiently tried both as to their Stoutness and dexterity in handling arms.

This gang privileges a number of the characteristics also valued in pirate fellowship: courage, steadfastness, and martial prowess. However, the corresponding section of the History of Highwaymen amplifies elements of fellowship. This iteration of Robin Hood ‘associat[ed] himself with several Robbers and Outlaws, as their Captain, because he was a stout Fellow, and would never entertain any of his Fraternity, before he had made sufficient Tryal of their

170 Smith, A Compleat History, 3rd Vol, p. 23.
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Courage, and Dexterity in using their weapons'. Calling Robin Hood 'a Man of extraordinary Courage' rather than a 'stout Fellow' is a small change when one reads the word 'fellow' to mean a male individual. However, implications of fellow feeling and communality evoked by 'fellow' and confirmed in the use of 'fraternity' are lost when 'man' is used instead. The General History's Robin is reimagined as a leader who demands power, whereas the History of Highwaymen's incarnation is a member of the group elevated to command.

The General History minimises the gang by replacing their actions with an episode that exclusively features Hood. The History of Highwaymen presents a series of episodes introduced by different outlaws. It notes that 'the chief men of courage next to him, in his plundering retinue, were Little John and William Scarlock, whom he always took with him for his seconds on any extraordinary adventure'. The narrative individualises members of the homosocial band, which makes Hood an exemplary figure among a group that are equally courageous. However, the General History diminishes communality by removing these statements and the episodes that follow. Instead, Hood acts alone to aid a widow indebted to her landlord. This edition privileges Robin's independent action. It imagines the protagonist as a highwayman who happens to lead a gang, a stark contrast with the medieval Robin Hood, for whom communality is a defining feature. This difference indicates that the pirate is the literary successor to outlaw communality, while the highwayman is the epitome of individualism.

The General History continues to diminish the profile of communality in earlier outlaw highwaymen by amending the Falstaff narrative. It mediates between earlier iterations of the character and the individuated gentleman highwaymen. This is achieved in part when the text adds an extensive section drawn from the Merry Wives of Windsor where Falstaff is embedded within society (p. 5–6). This section casts Falstaff as a fool and establishes his character outside the parameters of the gang and the highway. The text then pivots back to the highway, offering 'a less poetical Account of some of the merry Pranks which are recorded of our Hero; and indeed a very different Account from the foregoing' (p. 6). The compendium then amends the inception of his gang. It states that 'he took up the Occupation of a Gentleman Highwayman' before commenting that:

He first set out upon this unlawful Design by himself; but as Man need never want a Companion in Wickedness, several other dissolute and disorderly Gentlemen quickly enter'd themselves into his Service: Their Names were the same as before recited, and the Robberies they committed were almost innumerable. (p. 6)

This section describes a group of dissolute individuals who serve Falstaff, emphasising that they are disorderly. In contrast, the *History of Highwaymen* imagines a greater sense of cohesiveness and communality:

he took the Resolution of rifling innocent Passengers on the highway. Upon this unlawful Project he first went by himself, but the Age being vicious then as well as in these days, it was not long before he had some other riotous Gentleman listed themselves under his wicked Banners, namely, *Poins*, *Bardolf*, *Peto*, *Harvey*, and *Rossil*, who were resolved to stand by him to the last. Thus Sir John having admitted these others into his Society, it is almost incredible to relate the many Robberies they committed.\(^\text{175}\)

This Falstaff creates a community of robbers, whereas the *General History'*s Falstaff draws men into his 'Service'. Communality makes their success unbelievable, while in the *General History* their robberies are ‘innumerable’. The 1734 edition thus reworks Falstaff’s narrative to undermine the communality of the gang conveyed in his criminal biography incarnation. The pirate fellowships explored above are placed in contrast to amended gang narratives that privilege the leader and downplay homosociality.

The *History of Highwaymen* suggests that outlaw highwaymen form fellowships even when imagined for an eighteenth-century readership, while the eighteenth-century gentleman highwayman eschews homosocial bonds. It embeds the moral environment of outlaw narratives into its reimagined criminal biographies. The *General History*, however, remakes these characters further by removing gestures to homosociality and communality. The outlaw highwayman is ostensibly a member of a group, however the narrative privileges him as a protagonist. Placing pirate fellowships alongside these narratives distinguishes these two kinds of robber in this particular text. Contextualising the pirates of the *General History* with the highwaymen of the *History of Highwaymen* underlines how pirate fellowship invokes a moral environment of a much earlier context, rather than the value system embedded in contemporary contiguous narratives.

Other highwayman narratives offer complex accounts that satirise and undermine ideals of fellowship. The *Beggar’s Opera* ties highway robbery to communality through the text’s highwayman gang, who claim their relationships are honourable and faithful. As Spraggs notes, the highwaymen 'make a point of presenting themselves as a band of faithful comrades. “Who is there here that would not dye for his friend?” One of them cries rhetorically'.\(^\text{176}\) The robbers claim moral superiority because they live by a specific set of virtues, declaring that they are ‘Sound Men, and true!’ with ‘try’d Courage, and indefatigable

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\(^{176}\) Spraggs, p. 203.
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Industry’. 177 Macheath demonstrates ‘his honour as a highway robber’ by sharing his money with fellow gang members who are unsuccessful on the road.178 These men believe that they are far more loyal and honourable than the aristocracy and merchant classes they position themselves against.179 Macheath in particular asserts the moral superiority of their occupation and associated system of values so much that, according to Spraggs, ‘he believes that, as highwaymen, he and the other members of his gang are entitled to consider themselves “Men of Honour”; in other words as gentlemen’.180 The gang claim for themselves virtues apparently absent elsewhere in society.

The text challenges the reliability of their worldview, however. Spraggs argues that while the highwayman’s ‘generosity and loyalty to his friends are all left largely unmocked’ the opposite is true of ‘his and his fellow robbers’ belief in the moral superiority of their own subculture, their faith that the gang is an enduring repository of virtues that are no longer found in the wider society’.181 Spraggs suggests that the essential values of outlaw fellowship are diminished to ‘generosity and loyalty to his friends’. Fidelity and sharing the spoils becomes a personal choice, not a commitment made by the community. The text also directly challenges the sincerity of the gang’s communality when Macheath is betrayed by one of its members, Jemmy Twitcher.182 Loyalty is temporary, even within the gang who profess to hold themselves to a higher standard than the lawful. Spraggs argues that ‘for all their pride and vaunted honour, the highwayman cannot claim to live by their own separate system of values. They are far too dependent on Peachum’.183 The men are unable to remove themselves from the networks of commerce that determine one’s position in the early eighteenth century. Michael Denning argues that ‘in the staging of the ideology of the gang, the moral problem of the play becomes a political one. For the gang is not just a party, a conspiracy, a set of evil individuals; it is the new system, the mercantile commercial capitalism’.184 The transformation of the outlaw fellowship into the highwayman’s gang exposes an incompatibility between the system of commerce the characters are embedded within and the values of fellowships. The General History and the Beggar’s Opera explore this incompatibility in different ways through the pirate and the highwayman.

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178 Spraggs, p. 203.
181 Spraggs, p. 207.
182 Gay, The Beggar’s Opera. As It Is Acted at the Theatre-Royal in Lincoln’s-Inn-Fields, p. 72.
183 Spraggs, p. 208.
2.6 Certain chapters displace fellowship with other relations

Having identified how the General History's imagining of fellowship contrasts with the homosociality of other contemporary narratives, I now turn to how the text internally amplifies fellowship by displacing it in selected chapters. The General History offers an alternative imagining of male relations in 'Of Captain Misson' by pairing Misson with the dissolute priest Caraciolli. Misson's chapter title omits 'and his crew', signalling the prominence of the individual captain over the collective. It imagines pirate relations as a brotherhood, rather than a fellowship, where Misson and Caraciolli 'recommends to [the crew] a brotherly love to each other' that echoes Misson and Caraciolli's relationship. This chapter depicts a paternalistic leader who guides his men alongside a stalwart and constant companion. However, 'Of Captain Thatch/Teach' is my focus here because this chapter reframes episodes that recur in other narratives. It contrasts with the rest of the text by depicting personal bonds rooted in violence against women, rather than communal bonds. Looking to Blackbeard also offers an alternative reading of this pirate, who has an extensively studied and influential afterlife.

It is rare to see words like fellow, consort, or ally in Blackbeard’s chapter. Instead, the word 'friend' appears, which Johnson's Dictionary defines as 'one joined to another in mutual benevolence and intimacy', 'one without hostile intentions', 'one reconciled to another', and 'an attendant or companion'. These definitions focus on the personal relationship between two individuals. They contrast with the communality and collectiveness connoted in the many terms that denote fellowship. Moreover, as I discuss above, the Low/Lowther fellowship suggests that friendship is a precursor to fellowship. Thus, Blackbeard and those who sail with him are not fellows.

Violence against women initiates the relations between men in this chapter. It explains how:

Before he sailed upon his Adventures, he marry’d a young Creature, of about sixteen Years of Age, [...] Teach's fourteenth wife, whereof about a dozen might be still living. [...] with whom after he had lain all Night, it was his custom to invite five or six of his brutal companys to come ashore, and he would force her to prostitute her self to them all, one after another, before his Face. Blackbeard invites a select number of his crew to assault his wife. He does not invite the whole crew to cement their fellowship, but instead chooses six individuals. Turley and

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186 Blackbeard is given two different names. I use 'Thatch' when I discussing the character in the first octavo, 'Teach' when discussing the second and subsequent editions, and Blackbeard when discussing the General History as a whole.
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Karremann read this episode as evidence of the pirate’s transgressive masculinity. Karreman suggests that Blackbeard’s polygamy and the violation of his wife ‘becomes visible as a different quality: marked as bestiality, his notorious heterosexuality slips over the threshold into sodomy’, sodomy used ‘in the wider, early modern sense of the word’ as ‘the act of (enforced) adultery’. 189 Turley meanwhile suggests that the performance of sexual violence ‘before his Face’ raises questions about homoeroticism and sexuality. He questions ‘what sexually excites Blackbeard? The violence that his companions show toward his wife or the voyeurism explicit in the anecdote?’ 190 However, I suggest an alternative reading of this episode by approaching it in the context of homosociality. This chapter affirms male relations through a collective act of sexual violence. Blackbeard’s companions do not cuckold him, but rather are invited to share Blackbeard’s wife, as if she is a possession. His observation, although certainly voyeuristic, is not a humiliation but rather is a marker of his approval and connection with these particular individuals.

Blackbeard’s relationship with his men is further tied to violence against women when he takes up residence in the river in North Carolina:

sometimes he used them courteously enough, and made them presents of Rum, and Sugar, in Recompence of what he took from them; but, as for Liberties, (which ’tis said) he and his companions often took with the Wives and Daughters of the Planters, I can not take upon me to say, whether he paid them ad Valorem, or no. 191

The use of companions here suggests Blackbeard and his favoured crewmates take ‘liberties’ with the women. The suggestion that Blackbeard could have paid the planters ’ad valorem’ turns sexual assault into an economic transaction. It suggests that one can be paid a commensurate amount for an assault, and further confirms that these men form attachments with one another through sexual violence.

The personalisation of relations in this chapter affects the language used for division and abandonment. The chapter does not deploy the language of treachery when Blackbeard sabotages part of his crew and only splits the plunder with selected members. 192 Instead, this section charts how Blackbeard cheats his company and shares with his friends. The company consists of ‘Captain Teach in the Ship, which they called the Man of War, Captain Richards and Captain Hands in the Sloops, which they termed Privateers, and another Sloop serving them as Tender’ (p. 74). They successfully ransom a harbour of ships for provisions and wealth amounting to ‘1500l sterling’ (p. 74). The action echoes the episode found in the Avery

189 Karreman, p. 78.
190 Turley, p. 5.
192 The first and second octavos are consistent in their expression of this episode, except for the surname used for Blackbeard. To avoid unnecessary repetition I quote from the second octavo, unless otherwise identified.
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Chapter discussed earlier, as the prospect of splitting this plunder causes Blackbeard ‘to think of breaking up the Company, and securing the Money and the best of the Effect for himself and some others of his Companions he had most Friendship for, and to cheat the rest’ (p. 74). However, the language used alters our interpretation of this behaviour. Instead of betraying his companions Teach ‘cheats’ them when he purposefully ‘grounded his Ship, and then, as if it had been done undesignedly, and by Accident; he orders Hands’s Sloop to come to his Assistance, and get him off again, [...] and so were both lost’ (p. 74). Blackbeard then goes ‘into the Tender Sloop with forty Hands, and leaves the Revenge there; then takes seventeen others and Marroons them upon a small sandy Island’ (p. 74). These ‘brother rogues’ are not bound together by the fellowships expressed across their rest of the text as their relations are rooted in personal connections (p. 74).

The abridgements offer a different account of masculine relations when they focus more directly upon the captain in these episodes. The 1725 abridgement removes the idea of taking ‘liberties’ as it discusses the ‘wives and daughters’ of the planters, while the 1729 abridgment removes any mention of them.193 Both editions also remove any mention of Blackbeard’s wife. They use the word ‘friend’ to describe those Blackbeard is willing to share with: ‘he had Thoughts of breaking up the Company and securing the money, and the best of the effects for himself and his friends’.194 Unmoored from violence against women, the abridgements present an alternative masculine relation in which the idea of fellowship is diminished. Understanding the different representations of Blackbeard’s relationship with his crew underlines one of the wider arguments of this thesis. He is not representative of the homosocial relations explored in the text, and thus should not be invoked to stand in for the rest of the General History.

Conclusion

While ‘fellowship’ is not specifically used to describe pirate homosociality, I argue that the sustained depiction of pirates as fellows and the imagining of the archetypal pirate as a ‘worthy’ fellow, combined with the use of terms associated with fellowship in broadly contemporary definitions, and the term’s prominence in relevant literary antecedents, make fellowship a critically resonant collective noun to use. The General History imagines the pirate as a figure fully embedded in a homosocial community structured around fidelity and reliant on the value of one’s word.

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The profile of fellowship varies across this ten-year period. Ideas of fellowship and being a worthy fellow are more firmly articulated in the second and subsequent octavos. These editions amplify moments of communality and homosociality in ways that echo the *General History*'s outlaw antecedents. Crucially, they convey sincerity in their articulations of fellowship. The compendium edition maintains the account of fellowship offered by the second and subsequent octavos. However, by minimising communality in rewritten accounts of the highwaymen, the compendium suggests that fellowship is a unique facet of the literary pirate. In contrast, the abridgements diminish the profile of fellowship by amending and condensing parts of the narrative.

The *General History* offers an alternative imagining of male relations as friendships secured through violence against women in the Blackbeard chapter across multiple editions. This chapter brings the fellowship present across the rest of the text into relief, and positions this character as a captain, rather than a fellow. This analysis begins my reappraisal of the Blackbeard imagined across the narrative tradition of the *General History*.

The *General History* renders explicit elements of fellowship that are assumed in earlier outlaw narratives. It explores the moment a pirate is outlawed alongside the founding of fellowships. Some narratives emphasise fellow feeling and common grievance. They thus echo the core values expressed in earlier outlaw fellowships, and the idea of the ‘good fellow’. However, other mutinies express a dedication to making fortunes. These moments therefore embed ideas of commerce and acquisition within fellowships. The text offers masculine relations modelled on the values of earlier narratives that are in some senses anticipatory of how commerce might further develop.

In imagining fellowship in the early eighteenth century, the *General History* introduces tensions and incompatibilities that are not present in the *Geste of Robyn Hode*. By bringing ideas of fellowship to the surface of the text in moments of betrayal and bad fellowship, the *General History* strains the central premise of fellowship – that oaths rely on the value of one’s word. However, these are moments of crisis in the text, not a norm. Across chapters, particularly in the octavo and compendium editions, the text consistently represents fellowships that remain intact. The moments of crisis discussed above are not part of all of the chapters.

Recognising both the literary nature of the *General History* and the literary traditions it follows highlights the literariness of the ideas of fellowship, honour, and fidelity. As this chapter argues, a close reading across editions of the *General History* suggests that this text is neither an inexorable satire of fellowship, nor is it a highly romantic and revolutionary account of homosociality. Instead, the work of this chapter offers a middle course, that on the
one hand sees a sincerity in articulations of fellowship that, on the other, clash with the fundamental idea of being a pirate.

As the next chapter will explore, the text suggests that the pirate could be an evolution of the knight-errant of romance, but that the heroes in this age engage differently with chivalric ideas of adventure, in part due to changing ideas of commerce.
Chapter 3  The Captain

This thesis proposes that the General History constructs ‘the pirate’ through the narration of crew and captaincy. I argue that this text primarily imagines the pirate as protagonist through the captain. These interconnected, yet individuated protagonists are used to explore ideas of leadership, adventure, and commerce. This chapter focuses on continuity and discontinuity with antecedent and contemporaneous narratives of leadership, to argue that the figure of the pirate is an evolution of the adventurer hero driven by emerging forms of commerce.

Before turning to context, I briefly note the elements omitted from my discussion of the captain. Multiple editions refuse their female pirates the status and title of captain. The octavos foreground them on title pages and in advertisements, but deny them their own chapters. Their subsections may constitute the bulk of ‘Of Captain Rackam and his crew’; however, these women are not afforded the same status as the (male) captains. While this presents interesting lines of inquiry about gender and leadership, this is not my focus. The female pirates are significant protagonists; yet, the General History constructs ‘the captain’ as a type of man.

3.1  ‘The hero’

Late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century literary heroes influence the General History’s construction of the pirate as a protagonist. These depictions contextualise how the text uses, subverts, and adapts contemporary notions of the hero. This section outlines earlier literary notions of the hero, and considers how the rogue and outlaw were constructed.

Literary criticism frequently interchanges the terms protagonist and hero. According to Morton Bloomfield, Dryden first used the word hero to mean ‘a chief male personage in an epic, story, play, or poem’ in the seventeenth century. However, the term carries further connotations, even when used to denote a protagonist. Bloomfield argues that the connection between the protagonist and ideas of the hero is suggestive:

the fact that a word originally meaning a semi-divine creature has come, in one of its senses to mean the protagonist in literature, does tell us a good deal about how we conceived the chief personage in literary works from the seventeenth century onwards. (p. 29)

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This congruence indicates that the main character in literary works was constructed as an exceptional being from the seventeenth century. According to Bloomfield, European languages borrow the word ‘hero’ from Greek, where it referred to a ‘superhuman or semi-divine being whose special powers were put forth to save or help all mankind or a favoured part of it’ (p. 27). The term evolved through the medieval and early modern period, so that by the seventeenth century ‘hero in English could mean any notable or great human being, while at the same time keeping its more restricted Greek sense’ (p. 28). In the century before the publication of the General History ‘hero’ could mean both otherworldly beings and humans that were particularly remarkable.

Bloomfield’s reading of the etymology of ‘hero’ suggests that heroes are not necessarily exemplary, as post-Romantic uses of the word ‘heroic’ might suggest. He argues that many early heroes were ambiguous, and that ‘only the romantic period made all its heroes all heroic’ (p. 30). We should therefore not expect the hero in its earliest forms to be a moral example because ‘the hero does not normally fit easily into the moral mould. He is often both less and greater than ordinary moral categories’ (p. 31). This puts aside the question of whether illicit figures can be considered examples or models. Instead, a character is a hero if they are ‘above the average, [one] whose drive for glory, whether heavenly or earthly, raises them beyond the ordinary and the average’ (p. 31). The early modern hero was valued not as a moral example, but as someone beyond the norm.

Physical prowess, courage, and leadership are central to the hero in medieval and early modern texts. According to Bloomfield ‘military prowess, poetic power, courage, tragic acceptance, demonic power’ were ‘the various substitutes offered to effect’ the ‘heroic charisma’ typically expressed through ‘the magic powers of the hero’ in classical texts (p. 30). Prowess and character replace superhuman abilities, although ‘demonic power’ allows some latitude. Bloomfield describes the characters that might have been heroes: ‘the King who died for his people, the warrior who defeated the tribe’s enemies, the ruler who invented a new way of life’ (p. 30). Leaders, particularly those who acted in the interests of their people, who display physical prowess and martial achievements epitomise what Bloomfield calls ‘the original hero in early literature’ (p. 30).

Cultural and literary ideas of the hero fluctuated in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Samuel Johnson’s Dictionary offers an example of eighteenth-century understandings of the term, defining a hero as ‘a man eminent for bravery’ or as ‘a man of the
highest class in any respect'. Contemporary and translated complements emphasise how the Greek meaning, a courageous and superhuman figure, continued to influence use in the eighteenth century (p. 994). The first definition focuses exclusively on courage. The second, meanwhile, suggests that ‘hero’ could describe any man, as long as he is the most noteworthy of a collective – ‘Class’ denotes ‘a rank or order of persons’, where ‘highest class’ does not necessarily mean an aristocrat (p. 385). Johnson’s Dictionary also indicates what the General History’s contemporaries meant when they used the word heroic. First, it defines heroic as ‘productive of heroes’ – to be ‘heroick’ is to be descended from a hero. The emphasis on lineage is amplified through the illustrative quote from Shakespeare’s Henry VI, 'From John of Gaint doth bring his pedigree/Being both the fourth of that heroic line’ (p. 994). The second definition qualifies further: ‘Noble; suitable to a hero; brave; magnanimous; intrepid; enterprising; illustrious’ (p. 994). None of these examples suggest that a hero has to be morally good or exemplary. Instead, character and behaviour is crucial. Nevertheless, what constituted a hero was contested in this period, as James William Johnson argues:

despite the plethora of great men named in its literature, there was by no means a consensus in Stuart-Georgian England as to the attributes of the hero, the constituent elements of heroism, or even as to whether the heroic concept had any validity.3

Looking beyond Johnson’s Dictionary we see broad changes in how the hero was approached through the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. As Robert Folkenflik argues, ‘the Restoration and eighteenth century are of crucial importance’ in how modern ideas of the hero developed.4

Changes in the relationship between militarism and the hero were key. According to Folkenflik ‘the concept of military and political heroism seems at best tarnished or dubious’ after the Glorious Revolution.5 J Johnson charts a decline in the association between the hero and militarism, commenting that ‘in the 1680’s, with the heroic drama defunct and the traditional depiction of Stuart Heroism laughed away as sycophantic puffery, the basic idea of heroism underwent sharp critical scrutiny. The centuries old concept began a process of ideological mitosis’.6 He argues that the work of John Evelyn and Sir William Temple ‘retained

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the aristocratic ideal while de-emphasising the traditional stress on military conquest'. 7 Instead, a new conceptualisation focusing on ideas of Christian virtue developed through the century. For example, ‘Johnson attacks traditional notions of the hero, but he is concerned [...] to substitute in their place a hero at once pious and ambitious’. 8 The hero becomes less associated with action and militarism and more with virtue and service through the eighteenth century.

Percy Adams proposes approaching eighteenth-century protagonists as ‘anti-heroes’. He applies the term, coined post World War Two, to argue that ‘[Dryden and Corneille] and their age found their heroes to be different to ancient ones, or they interpreted those heroes differently’. 9 He suggests that ‘nearly every ancient hero had faults,’ and that all heroes had ‘non-heroic or anti-heroic qualities, at least in the eyes of the eighteenth-century and of the Christian era in general’. 10 The term ‘anti-hero’ attempts to reconcile ideas of the hero with protagonists that are not exemplary. Thus, this idea is distracting for my reading of the General History, because the idea of an ‘anti-hero’ obscures the way that the text plays with the line between the classical hero discussed by Bloomfield and what we might class as villainy. Folkenflik uses a similar language as he discusses the influence of the mock-heroic. He suggests that the works of Pope, Swift, and Gay had ‘anti-heroic concepts’. 11 Mock-heroic is ‘the use of epic style, tropes, and allusions in the treatment of a modern, unheroic, or trivial subject’. 12 I mention the genre not to suggest that the General History is mock-heroic, because it does not pretend to make something trivial heroic as a way of emphasising the thing's triviality. Rather, I offer the mock-heroic as a working idea for examining how ideas of the hero operate across the text. The General History references older ideas of the adventure hero in its treatment of a modern topic, the idea of piracy as commerce.

Written in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, the General History and its pirate protagonists illuminate the transition between two ideas of the hero, where militarism and martial prowess begin to give way to other values. Folkenflik summarises: ‘William was the last ruler of England to be painted officially in armour; in the eighteenth century such a warrior king gives way to “Farmer George”’. 13 As this chapter argues, in one sense the captain of the General History is a product of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century notions of the hero.

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8 Folkenflik, p. 17.
10 Adams, p. 34.
11 Folkenflik, p. 17.
13 Folkenflik, p. 19.
as a flawed character with significant martial prowess who embarks upon adventures. Yet in other ways he is also an anticipatory protagonist, although not of the virtuous Christian hero. Instead, as this chapter goes on to explore, he can also be read as an imagining of commerce in the form of free trade. He enacts the most extreme version of individualist free trade where the strong dictate the terms of commerce to those they dominate.

3.1.1 The hero as a rogue and an outlaw

‘Rogue’ is one of a collection of terms used across editions to describe captains and their men. Blackbeard’s crew are ‘Brother Rogues’, while Yeats and his companions declare that they are ‘as great Rogues as the best of them’. This term is prominent in the octavo and compendium accounts where Blackbeard is described as ‘the Superior in Roguery of all that company’, while the 1729 abridgement comments that ‘[he] died as much like a hardened Rogue as ever went on board a Ship’. *Samuel Johnson’s Dictionary* calls a rogue: ‘A wandering beggar; a vagrant; a vagabond,’ ‘A knave; a dishonest fellow; a villain; a thief,’ ‘A name of slight tenderness and endearment’ or ‘a wag’. Johnson's definitions evoke a comic or indulgent dimension that tempers the use of the word to mean ‘thief or villain’, rendering the person and behaviour less threatening. Similarly, definitions of roguery do not mention criminality beyond vagrancy: ‘The life of a vagabond’, ‘knavish tricks,’ and ‘waggery: arch tricks’. *Johnson’s Dictionary* suggests that roguery concerns trickery, not criminality. The OED also includes a certain comic slant or light-heartedness in its definition, which dates back to the sixteenth century; ‘a dishonest, unprincipled person; a rascal; a scoundrel’. Roguery is similarly cast as ‘an action or practise characteristic of a rogue; a rascally act; a misdeed.

The rogue is frequently connected in literature with the picaresque. ‘Picaro’, used to describe the protagonists of picaresque novels, is most frequently translated in English as ‘rogue’. These rogue protagonists feature in sixteenth-century Spanish narratives, and in European

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translations and adaptations between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. However, while some scholars approach 'the picaresque as a "closed" episode in the fiction of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain' others '[see] it as an "open" fictional tradition'.20 According to Ulrich Wicks this results 'in contemporary usage [where] the term "picaresque" seems to be applied whenever something "episodic" tied together by an "antihero" needs a name'.21 John P Kent and J L Gaunt argue that these approaches have led to a degree of elasticity, where picaresque is applied to texts where the hero makes a journey or serves a number of masters.22 They contend that this character 'might range from an out and out desperado to a well brought-up man or woman who is forced by circumstance to spend some time with the lower classes'.23 Richard Bjornson similarly argues that picaresque 'is usually employed to describe episodic open ended narratives in which lower class protagonists sustain themselves by means of their cleverness and adaptability during an extended journey through space and time, and various predominantly corrupt social milieux'.24 Class, a sole hero, and an episodic narrative are central in accounts of the picaresque as a narrative form.

These definitions create strict qualifications for the picaresque that exclude many texts with a rogue hero. Wicks proposes an alternative model that is useful for the discussion of the General History. He adapts Robert Scholes’s theorisation of fictional modes, which are 'a spectrum of “ideal types” of narrative fiction'.25 Wicks summarises that satire, history, and romance are 'the middle and end points of a spectrum of fictional possibilities’, with the picaresque placed between satire and history (p. 240). He suggests that these 'modes do not specifically impose a form and are thus pre-novelistic: they are applicable to fiction anytime, anywhere' (p. 241). He thus enables a paradigm where one can discuss the picaresque elements of a text without arguing that it is part of the narrow historical moment described in other theories of the picaresque. His analysis usefully frames a consideration of the captain as a rogue in the General History.

Wicks suggests that the world created in the text makes something picaresque. He argues that:

the essential picaresque situation – the fictional world posited by the picaresque mode – is that of an unheroic protagonist, worse than we, caught up in a chaotic

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21 Wicks, p. 240.
23 Kent and Gaunt, p. 245.
25 Wicks, p. 240.
world, worse than ours, in which he is on an eternal journey of encounters that allow him to be alternately both victim of that world and its exploiter. (p. 242)

The pirates of the General History are positioned as both victim and exploiter; they prey upon others, but are also the victims of an unfair labour market and predatory merchants. However, the pirates’ fellowships mean that they are not the ‘solitary figure’ that Wicks identifies. Nevertheless, while the General History is not a picaresque novel, the captain is a certain kind of lone figure that exists in a world worse than our own. Thinking about the General History alongside this research on the picaresque illuminates our understanding of the pirate protagonist as a rogue, and allows us to consider the captain as a variation of the picaresque hero.

The General History positions its pirates as outlaws in summaries of English laws concerning pirates. Fundamentally, an outlaw is either ‘a person declared to be outside the law and deprived of its benefits and protections’ or ‘a person who lives without regard for the law, a miscreant, felon, criminal’, although in practice these two senses are rarely distinguished from one another. Samuel Johnson’s Dictionary similarly defines the outlaw as ‘one excluded from the benefit of the law. A blunderer; a robber; a bandit’. The captains in the General History are denied the benefits and protections of the law. This is most forcefully asserted at the end of the octavos and in the opening of the abridgements through the text’s legal abstract. The octavos begin this abstract with the declaration that ‘A pyrate is Hostis humani generis, a common enemy with whom neither Faith nor Oath is to be kept, according to Tully’. The pirates are positioned outside the law, as individuals who are not owed any fidelity or honour by those within. It denies them the benefit of being a legally recognised enemy of state, noting:

Though Pyrates are called common Enemies, yet they are properly not to be termed so. He is only to be honour’d with that name, says Cicero, who hath a Commonwealth, a Court, a Treasury, Consent and Concord of Citizen, and some way, if Occasion be, of Peace and League.

Pirates are not only outlaws in the sense that they are denied the protection of the law within a given territory, they are also outlawed because they are denied the legal rights afforded to those recognised as an enemy of state. In contrast, the abridgements condense these sentiments into a single statement: ‘All countries and Nations have ever made laws against Pirates, looking upon them to be Hostes humani generis, Enemies of Mankind whom no Oaths

can bind’.\textsuperscript{30} This abstract establishes the pirate's legal position from the opening of the text, rather than reaffirming it at the end. Overall, these editions of the \textit{General History} frame pirates as individuals excluded from the legal protections citizens should enjoy.

Robin Hood is culturally positioned as the archetypal outlaw. Cartlidge argues that Hood is one of the many 'heroes depicted in medieval narratives' that 'turn out to be morally ambivalent, uncanny, or just plain socially destructive'.\textsuperscript{31} He observes that 'this legendary English outlaw [...] continues to provide a point of reference and a basic paradigm for the construction of anti-heroes in a wide range of different cultural contexts'.\textsuperscript{32} Cartlidge recognises how Hood has become a touchstone, against which other outlaws are measured.

Eric Hobsbawm's reading of Hood as the noble robber, a subcategory of the social bandit, has strongly influenced cultural and scholarly understandings of the outlaw. Hobsbawm's analysis draws upon the cultural image of Hood, calling him 'the international paradigm of social banditry'.\textsuperscript{33} Hobsbawm describes the noble robber as 'the most famous and universally popular type of bandit, the most common hero of ballad and song' (p. 49). His 'social bandits' are rural figures; 'peasant outlaws whom the lord and state regard as criminals but who remain within peasant society, and are considered by their people as heroes, as champions, avengers, fighters for justice, perhaps even leaders of liberation' (p. 20). According to Hobsbawm's conceptualisation, social bandits share a common identity with their peasant communities, and so target landlords. These social bandits are only 'leaders, in so far as tough and self-reliant men often with strong personalities and military talents are likely to play such a role, but even then their function is to hack out the way and not to discover it' (p. 29). This figure is a leader by circumstance and because of his character, not because of idealism or principle. Hobsbawm's understanding of these figures sees Hood as 'the champion, the righter of wrongs, the bringer of justice and social equity' (p. 46 – 7). His analysis has significantly influenced work about the outlaw, particularly in Rediker's use of the figure in his reading of the pirate.\textsuperscript{34}

Hobsbawm's readings differ from those driven by the earliest texts. He focuses upon a general idea present in the cultural imagination of his time, approached as if it were historical fact, rather than specific iterations of Robin Hood narratives. Cartlidge observes that this leads to a kind of circularity, where:

\textsuperscript{32} Cartlidge, pp. 13–14.
\textsuperscript{34} Rediker, \textit{Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age}, pp. 85–86; Rediker, \textit{Outlaws of the Atlantic: Sailors, Pirates and Motley Crews in the Age of Sail}, p. 72.
Hobsbawm's model seems to have been largely shaped (from the outset) by an awareness of such legends as Robin Hood's – so that attempting to apply his theorisation of 'social banditry' to the Robin Hood texts themselves only amounts to an appeal to his original premises.35

Cartlidge argues that one of the problems of Hobsbawm's reading is that 'defining a model of banditry in this way risks confusing sociology with mythology: it relies on readings of outlaw texts that are often remarkably naïve, taking at face value (as descriptions of reality) textual performances that are largely imagined'.36 Spraggs meanwhile argues that Hobsbawm’s reading is inconsistent with the character as depicted in medieval tales. She suggests that his Hood ‘is an imaginatively and morally satisfying figure, who has enormous literary and cultural influence’; however, this character ‘is not to be found in any of the medieval texts. The Robin Hood of original legend is a highway robber’.37 Redistribution on the basis of wealth rarely occurs in these narratives, where Hood is not a warrior for the peasant classes. Hobsbawm’s thesis is alluring; however, the textually based understandings of Cartlidge, Knight, and Spraggs are more persuasive in their readings of the medieval outlaw.

3.2 The captain is a form of hero in adventure narrative

Each narrative in the General History is the story of a character's life as a captain. All but one chapter begins when the protagonist becomes a leader. The preceding years are referenced in passing or ignored entirely. The process of becoming a captain therefore initiates the General History's figuring of the pirate. I argue that this text imagines a series of modalities of captaincy that influence our reading of the pirate generated by the text. Some are egalitarian, while others turn to notions of hierarchy and appointment.

This literary fiction imagines captaincy as a spectrum. It offers a number of modalities across editions that do not exist as fixed points. Rather, outlawed and non-outlawed captains move along this spectrum, constructing the captain as a shifting, multi-faceted protagonist. All captains negotiate the boundaries of legitimate and illegitimate behaviours, which are often consistent with literary and historical imaginings. The captains of the General History are used to explore the pirate’s relationship with egalitarianism; his/her relationship to a landscape imagined through the imperial eye, and his/her engagement with emerging forms of commerce. They can also sometimes reflect the accepted behaviours of conventional captains.

35 Cartlidge, p. 15.
36 Cartlidge, p. 15.
37 Spraggs, p. 52.
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In this chapter I argue that the captain is a new form of the hero found in adventure narrative influenced by emerging ideas about commerce. The captain as imagined in the *General History* develops from older models of the hero, those flawed men who exhibit martial prowess. This imagining is bound to ideas of adventure developed in literature first through the knightly quest, then through explorers who, as exploration is commodified, transition into merchant venturers. The text anticipates budding forms of commerce, which developed from the activities of merchant venturers. The pirate captain in the *General History* is therefore an (ad)venturer, an imagining of the values of adventure and venture taken to an extreme.

I focus on the captain as a literary protagonist, without ignoring the context of the historical captain. I interpret these protagonists in conversation with other models of leadership, expressed through individuated men in relevant literary texts. In doing so, I demonstrate how imaginings of the outlaw leader, the highwayman gang leader, and the conventional captain intersect with the captains of the *General History*. However, most crucially, by analysing this literary fiction's imagining of the pirate captain across editions and in conversation with these figures, I argue that the captains of the *General History* speak to emerging forms of commerce in ways that other leader figures do not.

3.2.1 Adventure as a literary theme

The word ‘adventure’ is often used as a synonym for an episode that involves some element of chance or unpredictability, but as Kevin Cope and Alexander Pettit observe:

> adventure is something outside the ordinary, the mainstream, and the conventional, yet the contributors to [Adventure: An Eighteenth-Century Idiom] all speak of ‘adventure’ as an identifiable genre, medium, or mode, thereby suggesting that this seemingly unpredictable phenomenon evidences a degree of stability and conventionality.  

Knights, merchants, and outlaws; travel, chance, and frequent episodes of dramatic action are key tropes in adventure narratives from the Middle Ages into the early eighteenth century.

Early modern narratives tie together adventure and quest. Beverly Kennedy argues that ‘adventure’ is derived ‘from the Latin phrase *res adventura* meaning “that which is to come”’. In Middle English the word described ‘fate, fortune, chance’ as well as ‘something that happens, an event or occurrence’ and ‘a venture, an enterprise, a knightly quest’ (p. 38). According to Kennedy, ‘extraordinary demonstration of skill and daring’ are central to

adventure narratives, particularly in those articulated through the knight’s quest (p. 42). Helen Cooper fulsomely articulates the relationship between adventure and the quest in her examination of romance. She argues that a journey in narrative in the Middle Ages could be split into two categories: the spiritual pilgrimage and the romance quest. I focus on the latter as is it concerns the journey of knights, one of the literary antecedents of the pirate captain explored in this chapter. A quest is ‘a journey to an unknown destination’ through ‘unfamiliar topography’ with a specific objective, usually given to the protagonist by a woman, or a master (p. 68 – 9). Cooper suggests that these journeys are not coherent and consistent, as the practicalities of travel make wandering a characteristic part of the knight’s journey (p. 71). The quest can therefore be constituted as a series of adventures. According to Cooper:

A quest romance is essentially linear, following the lines taken by the protagonist’s journeyings. The ‘plot’ will consist largely of a series of adventures encountered along the way: adventures that are usually in some way related to the final object of the quest itself. (p. 46)

In this understanding adventures are episodes that contain an element of chance and contribute to the broader object of the protagonist’s journey. Cooper argues that ‘the aim of the quest, its poetic as well as geographical end,’ both defines the story and gives it purpose ‘even though it may start haphazardly, “by adventure”, and proceed with adventures that appear equally adventitious’ (p. 47). She distinguishes between the quest, which is a journey with a specific aim, and the component adventures that occur ‘as a result of an external factor or of chance, rather than by design or inherent nature’. Adventure, then, is a component part of the quest narrative that appears in Medieval and Early Modern romances.

As Knight observes, the Gest of Robyn Hode also belongs ‘to the medieval romance tradition of interlacing events and adventures’. The ties between Hood and adventure are simultaneously obscured and illuminated in scholarship and twentieth-century iterations. Dobson and Taylor call Robin Hood ‘a swashbuckling adventurer’, while Joseph Falaky Nagy describes ‘the figure of the outlaw’ as ‘the man who exists beyond society and has adventures which would be impossible for normal members of society’. The title shared by a 1938 film, a 1955 – 59 television series, and a 1956 book; The Adventures of Robin Hood, most neatly exemplifies how Hood and ideas of adventure are entangled. The word adventure is often

40 Cooper, p. 45.
42 Knight, Robin Hood: A Complete Study, p. 74.
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used in discussions of Robin Hood, but the term itself is not interrogated, which is revealing. It suggests that Hood is so fully accepted as an archetype of adventure that scholarship does not question how these ideas operate.

In contrast, scholarship on Malory contextualises the role of adventure in romance. The Morte D'Arthur acts as a representative example of how the narratives that precede the General History figure adventure. Donald L Hoffman interrogates adventure as a method for organising narrative in Malory's 'collection of self-contained narratives'. He argues that 'there is a degree of congruency between' adventure and narrative, as both are 'presumed to have “a beginning, a middle, and an end”' (p. 145). He suggests that Malory offers differing notions of adventure, where a knight 'embark[s] on an urgent adventure (a goal with a foreseeable conclusion)', and also 'succumbs to adventures (random encounters with chance opponents and accidental ladies)' (p. 149). Similarly, another knight 'on his way to complete his adventure (the task imposed on him by his mother) [...] is side-tracked by adventures (his enemies' plots to prevent him from achieving his goal), and seduced by adventures (chance, romantic encounters)' (p. 152). Hoffman suggests that narrative and plot drive different understandings of the same term. Accordingly, new meanings of narrative and adventure emerge over the course of the text:

Narrative no longer has a beginning, middle and end, but becomes an arbitrary sequence of then, then, and then. [...] This narrative non-structure changes the notion of adventure from a quest undertaken and, at last fulfilled, to a notion of adventure as a random series of chance encounters. (p. 154 – 5)

For Hoffman adventure refers to both the quest and the episodes that occur during the quest, while Cooper uses it to refer exclusively to the latter.

Kennedy focuses on the significance of risk and exploit in Malory's adventures. She argues that:

Malory ensures that his reader will not overlook the young king's extraordinary love of adventure in both senses of 'risk' and 'exploit.' It is a love which he shares with his knights and which is grounded in the voluntarist belief that a man can achieve great 'exploits' so long as he is willing to take great 'risks'.

Her account complicates our understanding of adventure as a constituent element of the quest. It reminds us that 'risk' and 'hazard' are both central to understanding an episode as an adventure. Kennedy then argues that Malory increasingly uses the word adventure to mean fate or chance as the text progresses. Hoffman meanwhile, argues that 'Adventure, while it primarily implies a task to be performed, a goal to be achieved, nevertheless includes the idea

45 Kennedy, p. 43.
46 Kennedy, p. 48.
of “fortune”. Therefore, as Cooper, Hoffman, and Kennedy all indicate, adventure was a complex literary idea in the early modern period, which was associated with chance and risk, as well as the more specific ideas communicated in the course of a quest, and in the quest itself.

Quest romance directly influenced exploration and voyage, and their literary representations, in the early modern period. Cooper argues that ‘the quest, and the possibilities of wealth and power awaiting in a land of promise at the end of the quest, offered a conceptual framework for the early voyages’. As a result, life imitated art, in that ‘exploration seemed to offer the prospect in the real world of fulfilling the aspirations romances had channelled into the quest’ (p. 77). Jennifer Goodman similarly argues that the chivalric ethos of romance influenced both the representation of exploration and travel, and the actual activities of explorers. She suggests that ‘chivalry and exploration have been comrades since at least the days of Marco Polo, if not since the days of the first crusade’ (p. 5). Her work indicates that engagement with notions of chivalry creates a continuum between knights and explorers, where explorers deployed a language of chivalry to communicate their adventures. The knight-adventurer therefore transitions into the explorer-adventurer through a shared chivalric ethos.

Merchants also used this language:

the appearance of chivalric terms like ‘merchant adventurer’ and ‘enterprise’ in the mercantile vocabulary during the sixteenth century suggests that merchants of this period may have based their images of themselves more on knightly values than on a tradition of ‘bourgeois prudence’. (p. 88)

Goodman therefore suggests that both merchants and explorers were framed in literature and in practice by a language of adventure and chivalry. She indicates that the knight is commodified through these two figures by the beginning of the seventeenth century. Commercialised explorers transition into merchant venturers as exploration is further commodified.

Barbara Fuchs’s reading of Elizabethan and Jacobean pirate literature suggests that pirates were also framed as adventurers in seventeenth-century imaginings. She asserts that ‘the English experience of piracy has usually been glorified as the proleptic wanderings of a future imperial power – piracy as the vanguard of the Empire’, noting that her work ‘complicate[s] this narrative of heroic exploits by analysing how piracy proves a constant source of tension and embarrassment for the Jacobean state as it focuses on trade as a means to empire’. She argues that for the Jacobean world ‘piracy seems an embarrassing throwback to an epic time

47 Hoffman, p. 147.
48 Cooper, p. 77.
50 Fuchs, p. 45.
of adventures rather than ventures, when the niceties of trade were disregarded. Yet in a dark way it mimics the incredible accumulation that was the goal of all mercantile (ad)ventures. This 'epic time of adventures' seems to be the chivalric exploration of the fifteenth century examined by Goodman. Fuchs suggests that adventure and venture are distinct yet overlapping terms, without explicitly defining either. Jowitt similarly makes this distinction, arguing that in the Renaissance there was an 'on-going debate between “epic” patterns of behaviour, such as martial valour and heroic adventure, and “romance” values, where, for example, wily duplicity and commercial venture are privileged'. She suggests that the 'behaviour [of the pirate] can be seen to operate in both registers'. A tension between adventure and venture, and between piracy and commerce was present in early seventeenth-century imaginings.

Other scholars have similarly argued that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century mariners transitioned from adventurer to venturer. Richard Blakemore observes that 'historians have generally argued that seafarers transformed from collaborative adventurers with a share in their vessel to the first international wage-earning proletariat' between the medieval period and the eighteenth century. His argument 'refines the previous interpretation' by arguing that 'they were not simply wage-workers, but also independent participants in a venture economy'. Blakemore's specific case study is indicative of wider trends in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, where developments in trade and commerce influenced the perception and practice of maritime activities. Following Fuchs, I argue that we can see a similar shift occurring in the literature of piracy in the early eighteenth century, where the pirate captain mediates the characteristics of the literary heroes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the developing concerns of the eighteenth-century commercial world. He becomes an imagining of the ethos of the merchant venturer taken to its extreme that continues to invoke the values of earlier adventurer heroes.

3.2.2 Uses of the word ‘hero’ in the General History

The General History uses the word hero infrequently. Captains could be heroes, are mockingly called heroes, or are revealed not to be heroes. This negative conceptualisation is most clearly evidenced through Blackbeard in the octavo and compendium editions. Blackbeard is called ‘a courageous Brute, who might have passed in the world for a Heroe, had he been employ’

Fuchs, p. 47.
Jowitt, p. 15.
Jowitt, p. 15.
Blakemore, p. 1153.
in a good Cause’. Here, the activity of piracy is placed at odds with the nature of the individual, implying that the activity itself prevents one from being a hero. Later, the text mocks the idea of Blackbeard as a hero: ‘so our Heroe, Captain Teach, assumed the Cognomen of Blackbeard’. There is an ironic tone here – he is ‘our’ hero, not ‘a hero’ because he is our focus in this particular moment. It emphasises his place as a protagonist, not his qualities as a character. These two moments emphasise that he is not a hero, only has the potential to be one.

The text is even more direct when discussing Avery. The octavos and compendium editions challenge the notion that Avery could be considered a hero: ‘Avery only cannonaded at a Distance, and some of his Men began to suspect that he was not the Hero they took him for’. The most valorised pirate of the ‘golden age’ is not a hero by the standards of his fellows in this text because he displays neither martial prowess, nor courage, when he participates in predation.

The abridgements, meanwhile, remove or amend these episodes, omitting the exploration of the captain as not a hero. Blackbeard’s chapter includes neither of the sections discussed above. Similarly, the Avery episode is reframed without the word hero: ‘Avery contented himself to cannonade at a Distance, which made many of his Men begin to mutiny, damning him for a coward’. The abridgements describe a stronger reaction to Avery’s infraction, which begins to demonstrate the extent to which the pirates, and this text, value courage in leadership. The octavos offer a captain who is explicitly not a hero, while the abridgements omit explicit references.

Paying close attention to differences across editions highlights the complexities expressed in this text. It exposes ambivalence towards ideas of the hero in the text’s descriptions of the pirate protagonists. Nevertheless, the captains of the General History display characteristics consistent with the ideas of the hero expressed in Johnson’s Dictionary and Bloomfield’s analysis. The prefaces to the octavo editions gesture to these ideas when they suggest that ‘Bravery and Strategem in War’, make the actions of pirates ‘worthy of record’. Crucially, the representation of negotiation of the sea space as a kind of martial prowess and an emphasis

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on courage imagines the pirate protagonist as an iteration of the early modern hero, despite the sparing use of the word hero. The General History plays with ideas of the hero in its protagonists without explicitly calling them heroes. This is another element of the complex literary nature and artifice of this text.

3.2.3 The captain is imagined as an explorer and negotiator of the maritime sphere

Technical skill is essential in the General History's imaging of captaincy. Across editions Davis's chapter suggests that captaincy is predicated on the success of the venture, which requires an appropriate knowledge of and ability to navigate the sea. In the octavos Davis must prove his abilities:

Davis then proposed to his Men to attack her, telling them, she would be a rare Ship for their Use, but they looked upon it to be an extravagant Attempt, and discovered no Fondness for it, but he assured them he had a Stratagem in his Head would make all safe; wherefore he gave Chace, and ordered his Prize to do the same.61

He convinces a ship that his prize is a fellow pirate, which intimidates them into surrender. After this success the company plunder 'a great many ships'.62 This elevates the company's opinion of his leadership: 'They began now to conceive so high an Opinion of his Conduct, as well as Courage, that they thought nothing impossible to him'.63 The sentence order and syntax prioritises his 'conduct' over his bravery. Davis has shown courage, however, it is his ability to negotiate both land and sea that make him an effective leader. The abridgements, in contrast, remove this sentiment. They also reorder the opening of the first section and remove the phrase 'but they looked upon it to be an extravagant Attempt, and discovered no Fondness for it'.64 The abridged Davis’s technical skill is unquestioned and demonstrated through action, while the octavo's Davis must prove his technical skill, and does so with great success.

Challenges to Major Bonnet's leadership across editions amplify the importance of technical skill. In the first octavo mutineers decide to 'turn him out of command'; an action the text calls 'committing a sort of Pyracy upon him'.65 It places Bonnet in the same position as many non-pirate captains. The comparison is ironic – the man who sets out to become a pirate falls

victim to piracy. Yet, it also speaks to ideas of leadership in the text. Bonnet’s ownership of the ship is entirely legitimate, regardless of his intent to use it for piracy. The action to remove him is therefore both piracy and civil dissention because the crew challenge both his ownership and his leadership. The successful challenge to his leadership renders ownership immaterial as a foundation for leadership.

The text instead implies that Bonnet is not challenged because he owns the ship but because he does not display the characteristics pirates require of their leaders. His replacement, Blackbeard, is deemed a suitable leader because he displays the characteristics that Bonnet lacks. He is an efficient predator, because he is ‘a good sailor’ and ‘would not stick at perpetrating the most abominable wickedness imaginable’ (p. 62). The first octavo presents two reasons for Bonnet’s failure; first, that he was ‘not acquainted with sea affairs’ and therefore had to listen to others ‘for want of a competent knowledge in maritime affairs’, and secondly, that he ‘found his Authority too weak to bring [his crew] to Order,’ and so ‘they began to shew a Disrespect, even to a Contempt of all he said or did’ (pp. 60 – 2). The first suggests that a knowledge of the maritime space pirates travel within is essential to the Captain, while the second points to charisma, an ability to impose one’s will. The text amends the former and removes the latter in the second and subsequent octavos, fashioning a changing landscape of the pirate captain as a leader.

The first octavo uses both ‘sea affairs’ and ‘maritime affairs’ to describe the space pirates operate within, whilst the second exclusively uses ‘maritime’. Instead of not being ‘acquainted with sea affairs’, the Bonnet of the second octavo does not ‘[understand] maritime affairs’. The phrase ‘sea affairs’ implies knowledge of the marine world – of how to traverse the ocean, while the word maritime has been used since the seventeenth century to describe activity ‘connected, associated, or dealing with shipping, naval matters, navigation, seaborne trade’ – the business that takes place on the sea. In replacing ‘sea affairs’ with ‘maritime affairs’, the text characterises the pirate as part of commercial, human activity, not part of the natural landscape of the sea. The reconfiguration aligns his activity with venture and commerce. The second octavo also removes the idea that a lack of authority and respect causes Bonnet’s downfall. It emphasises the need for knowledge and skills suited to the space they inhabit, instead of connecting knowledge, the ability to impose one’s will, and the respect displayed by the crew, to leadership. Captaincy becomes about technical skill, rather than charisma.

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The second volume’s opening chapter, ‘Of Captain Misson’, further emphasises the significance of maritime knowledge. Jones asserts that the *General History* ‘describes this pirate as a great revolutionary and founder of a utopian ‘Libertalia’: providing the name and “history” that lends most to the tenacious narratives of an alternative libertarian community of Madagascar’.68 Misson differs significantly from the pirates found in the rest of the *General History* – he is the entirely fictional younger son of a French aristocrat, and his captaincy is bound to his relationship with the dissolute priest Caracioli. Nevertheless, even this outlier exemplifies the expectation that a captain will be able to navigate the sea space. The chapter details Misson’s endeavour to become an able seaman: ‘this Cruize [...] gave him a great Insight into the practical Part of Navigation. He grew fond of this Life, and was resolved to be a compleat Sailor,’ and was:

very inquisitive in the different Methods of working a ship: His Discourse was turn’d on no other Subject, and he would often get the Boatswain and Carpenter to teach him in their Cabbins the constituent Parts of a Ship's Hull and how to rig her.69

Misson spends his time as a mariner developing the skills that allow him to captain a ship. He is not a seaman at the start of his chapter; however, unlike Bonnet, he redresses his lack of knowledge before he takes command. The text recognises his success, calling both Misson and Caraccioli ‘expert Mariners, and very capable of managing a Ship’ before they turn pirate.70 Across editions the *General History* imagines the captain as a capable seaman.

The idea that these men are somehow fated to be leaders is nevertheless embedded amidst articulations of the significance of technical skill. Blackbeard’s narratives most overtly express this notion, but it also appears as an undercurrent that signals the literariness of this text as a whole. The octavos and compendium suggest that Blackbeard’s captaincy is inevitable: ‘yet tho he had often distinguished himself for his uncommon Boldness and personal Courage, he was never raised to any Command, till he went apyrating’.71 The 1725 abridgement similarly asserts ‘he had often distinguished himself for his Boldness, but was never thought fit to be entrusted with any Command, till he went a pirating’.72 In contrast, punctuation in the 1729 abridgement disconnects his boldness from leadership potential, by replacing ‘Boldness, but was’ with ‘Boldness. He was’.73 This abridgement divorces leadership from his conduct and character, while the 1725 abridgement, octavo and compendium editions imply a connection.

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68 Jones, p. 75.
The captain's technical skill is placed alongside the sense of inevitability that is fostered, in part, by the structure of the text. The *General History* suggests that a character’s tenure as captain is fated by including 'captain' in chapter titles named after the protagonists. Chapters where the captain is chosen also express the idea that the captain is somehow fated. Davis's election is 'by a great majority of legal Pollers, there was no Scrutiny demanded, for all acquiesced to the choice'.

He is positioned as a natural and inevitable choice from the moment he organises the insurrection to the moment all aboard the ship recognise his leadership without any opposition. Roberts is similarly recognised in the second octavo in the speech that establishes him as a 'worthy Fellow'. He is chosen, despite the candidature of three of the 'lords', and 'tho’ he had not been above six weeks among them'. The remainder of this chapter underlines Roberts' technical skill through the vast number of acquisitions these pirates make. Hence his skill is bound to the suggestion that his captaincy is somehow fated. In the pirate captain the mythos of fatedness is combined with the modernity of skill. They are fated because they possess technical skill and courage.

### 3.2.4 Courage is valued in both pirates and other adventurer heroes

Courage is explicitly valued in the captains of the *General History*. Across editions pirates demand that their leaders display courage and punish those that do not. It defines multiple protagonists – Dennis's ideal captain is a 'Man of Courage', Roberts is described as having 'good natural Parts and personal Bravery', Blackbeard has 'uncommon Boldness, and personal Courage', England ‘did not want for courage’, and Kennedy is ‘preferred to the Command merely for his Courage’. In the abridgements Avery is 'chosen captain of the Duke purely for his Courage and Contrivance' and England is 'brave and good natured'. Across editions it is the most important attribute for a captain, as these examples evidence. The text invokes the values of military leaders and early modern heroes in its construction of the captain. These captains are given the affective qualities of the early modern hero.

Selected chapters of the *General History* take the idea that courage is essential to the hero, expressed in its literary antecedents, to an extreme. By hyper-valuing courage these pirates transform bravery into an end in and of itself, rather than a means to effective leadership. Across editions Vane overrules his company and choses to leave a potential prize ship. As a consequence, in the octavos:

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the next Day, the Captain's Behaviour was obliged to stand the Test of a Vote, and a Resolution was passed against his Honour and Dignity, branding him with the Name of Coward, deposing him from the Command, and turning him out of the Company.  

Similarly, in the abridgements 'The next Day the Matter was called over again, when they deposed Vane from the Command for being a Coward, and put him on Board a small Sloop'. Vane does not endanger the fellowship; however, he fails to capture a ship as his men desire. In other contexts his action might be viewed as military prudence. In this text the pirates value courage to such an extent that anything other than aggressive courage is cast as cowardice. Courage is so vital to the pirate enterprise that a captain can be deposed for cowardice and expelled from the pirate company in disgrace. There is no place for cowards in these fellowships that hyper-value courage.

Across editions a lack of courage renders one a villain. The octavos particularly juxtapose courage and cowardice. When Low leaves his companions at the mercy of a naval ship:

The Conduct of Low was surprizing in this Adventure, because his reputed Courage and Boldness, had, hitherto, so possess'd the Minds of all People, that he became a Terror, even to his own Men; but his Behaviour through this whole Action, shewed him to be a base cowardly Villain.

A reputation for courage is so significant in the world of pirates that it turns the captain in question into a 'terror'. Yet this reputation is not robust – it only takes one episode of cowardice to prompt a complete revision of his character. One must constantly display courage in order to be considered a leader, while cowardice is cast as villainy. ‘His behaviour through this whole action’ reveals a ‘base Cowardly’ nature. The abridgements, however, remove the description of Low’s reputed courage, condensing this assessment: ‘Lowe’s Conduct, in this Engagement, shewed him to be a Cowardly Villain’. This statement offers a more direct summary of character. The abridgements lose the idea that you have to consistently display courage in order to not be a coward by removing the ideas of reputation and courage expressed in other editions. The contrast between editions highlights how the octavos contrast the affective qualities of the hero with notions of villainy.

Courage, martial prowess, and success in their adventures are central to the hero in the captain's literary antecedents, particularly in Robin Hood narratives, and in the romance narratives that foreground the figure of the knight. These three themes are consistently depicted in the captains of the General History across editions, and their absence in certain characters is noted as a failing. This emphasises both continuities between captains and their

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literary predecessors, and the centrality of key characteristics of the adventurer hero in the protagonists of the *General History*. Yet, selected episodes take the expression of these values to the extreme, or mould them to the world the pirates exist within. Courage is hyper valued and martial prowess becomes technical skill.

### 3.3 Captains, landscape, and the ‘imperial eye’

Space and place are key to the literary outlaw. The highwayman is named after the roads he thieves upon, while, according to Cartlidge, an association with the forest is fundamental to Robin Hood.\(^\text{82}\) The pirate is similarly defined by his/her actions upon the high seas. As Richetti recognises, imaginations of the pirate ‘as a compelling mythical figure who combines the attractions of the merchant-traveller with the seductive vigour of the criminal’ makes him/her unique.\(^\text{83}\) The pirate is often explored in literature and scholarship through a relationship to the pirate ship, and in relation to the sea.

My reading of the text also explores how the captains of the *General History* exist in front of, and in relation to, landscape. They explore the coasts of colonial America and Africa, making port in Carolina, Madagascar, and Brazil. The text integrates travel writing by offering extensive descriptions of landscape through the course of the pirates’ exploration, which amplifies the hybridity of the text. Crucially, while exploration is key to the captain as a figure emerging from the seventeenth century, his relationship to landscape is central to understanding how he partakes in and pre-empts the changes of the eighteenth century. The captain as an adventurer is defined through a relationship to landscape, mediated through the lens of imperial travel writing.

These editions describe landscape and the people who inhabit the land through what Mary Louise Pratt calls ‘the imperial eye’. She argues that in travel writing ‘the imperial eye’ ‘made imperial expansion meaningful and desirable to the citizenries of imperial countries, even though the material benefits of empire were accrued mainly by the few’.\(^\text{84}\) The *General History* draws upon the conventions of travel books that ‘gave European reading publics a sense of ownership, entitlement and familiarity with respect to the distant parts of the world that were being explored, invaded, invested in and colonized’ (p. 3). These texts were constructed to justify and moralise colonisation and imperialism. According to Pratt these texts ‘created a sense of curiosity, excitement, adventure, and even moral fervour about European

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\(^{82}\) Cartlidge, p. 16.
\(^{83}\) Richetti, p. 65.
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expansionism' (p. 3). The *General History's* use of landscape and socio-political descriptions of peoples partake in this particular dimension of imperial travel writing.

The *General History* does this in two ways. First, it places the captain against landscapes formed by people and places. This version of the imperial lens offers people as something to be viewed and studied for their differences to the European reader. The first octavo contains several descriptions of landscape. 'Of Captain Edward England and his Crew' exoticizes the landscape and people of Malabar:

> Malabar is a fine fruitful country in the East indies, [...] it reaches from the Coast of Camara to Cape Comorin [...] The Old Natives are pagan, but there are a great number of Mahometans inhabiting among them, who are either Merchants or Pyrates and all very Rich.\(^85\)

It offers details of physical properties and co-ordinates similar to those often found in contemporaneous travel writing. However, the imperial dimension is most evident in how the text frames the inhabitants as both a religious other, and as potential pirates. The *General History* imagines British Colonial America as a civilised space that tries and executes pirates, while places in Africa and India are framed as strange and exotic lands to be explored and cultivated.

The second dimension of the *General History*’s imperial eye emerges as it zooms in to offer detailed ethnographic cultural descriptions. The second and subsequent octavos amplify the landscape by offering additional descriptions of this kind. The abridgements, by contrast, offer the inverse when they omit key descriptions. In the second octavo a lengthy section titled ‘A Description of Brasil &c’. places Roberts’ company in front of a landscape composed of people and physical geography. It imagines European settlers as somehow ‘corrupted’ by their exposure to native inhabitants, where ‘Women (not unlike the Mulatto Generation every where else) are fond of Strangers; [...] but the Unhappiness of pursuing Amours, is, that the generallity of both Sexes are touched with veneral Taints’.\(^86\) This imperial imagining sees integration with native peoples as a challenge to European values. While some additions offered by the second volume describe the pirate interacting with systems of governance and non-Europeans as part of the action of the text, native peoples are predominantly imagined as a background the pirate is placed against.

Crucially, these landscapes are offered as a place of untapped potential for adventures, which ‘none of our Countrymen are adventurous enough to pursue, though it very probably, under a prudent Manager, would be attended with Safety and very great Profit’ (p. 218). Pirates

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pursue the opportunities this landscape affords, within a geography that is complicit in piracy. The second octavo adds the comment that: ‘there are so many little Islands and Keys, with Harbours convenient and secure for cleaning their vessels, and abounding with what they often want, Provision’ (p. 24). The landscape creates the conditions for pirates to exist outside society and provides opportunity for ventures.

Richetti suggests that the ‘use of the truly revolutionary ethos of the travel book enables [the pirate] to transcend the narrow world of criminal narrative’. The geographic descriptions and space traversed by the pirates help to construct protagonists that are a new kind of adventurer. The description of exotic lands and foreign people unknown to the reader make the pirate captain a kind of explorer, adventuring into spaces of untapped commercial potential. The pirate captain is offered as a kind of vanguard of empire as he is imagined against the landscapes made by this text.

3.4 Captains, predation, and commerce

The General History can be read as a text emerging from the long seventeenth century. With this approach the pirate captain is a consolidation of the knight to merchant transition in the adventurer figure. However, in another sense the General History can be read as a text of the early eighteenth century, as an imagining of new kinds of commercial enterprise. This text views unorthodox venture and predation as viable methods of conducting commerce.

Here the notion of venture becomes increasingly important. Fuchs’s reading of Jacobean pirates suggests that ‘adventure’ and ‘venture’ are connected yet distinct concepts. Building on her analysis, I argue that we should approach the pirate as an (ad)venturer. This requires these two terms to be untangled, in part because there is significant crossover in their use at this literary-historical juncture. The OED exemplifies these ties in its first definition of venturer: ‘one who ventures, in various senses; an adventurer’. Contemporary definitions of both terms share a common language of risk, endeavour, and hazard. In Johnson’s Dictionary an adventure is ‘an accident; a chance; a hazard; and event of which we have no direction’, ‘the occasion of casual events; an enterprise in which something must be left to hazard’, while an adventurer is ‘he that seeks occasions of hazard; he that puts himself in the hands of chance’. Similarly, to venture was ‘To dare’, ‘To run a hazard’, and also ‘to engage in; or make attempts without any security or success upon mere hope’ (p. 2134). A venturer was

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87 Richetti, p. 64.
88 ‘Venturer, n.’ in OED Online (Oxford; Oxford University Press, December 2019)
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‘he who ventures’ (p. 2134). *Johnson’s Dictionary* does not include commercial connotations, instead focusing on venture as any speculative act without guarantee of success.

Nevertheless, the OED dates the definitions of both ‘an enterprise of a business nature in which there is considerable risk of loss as well as chance of gain; a commercial speculation’ and ‘one who undertakes or shares in a commercial, or trading venture, esp. by sending goods or ships beyond seas, a merchant-venturer’ to the sixteenth century.\(^{90}\) Similarly, the word ‘venturesome’ has described actions ‘Of the nature of, characterized by, or involving risk; hazardous, risky’ since the seventeenth century.\(^{91}\) At the beginning of the eighteenth century commercial definitions of venture and venturer contributed to a developing language of commerce.

Cope and Petit argue that ideas of ‘adventure’ were ‘modernised’ in the eighteenth century.\(^{92}\) In this period ‘happenstance fell into the background, while grandeur, risk and novelty entered the spotlight’ (pp. xi – xii). This ‘modernisation’ included the ‘acqui[sition of] a specifically economic meaning during the period: that of an innovative or hazardous business or banking enterprise’ (p. xiv). Adventure ‘could describe a stock or investment scheme, a banking enterprise, a lottery or lottery-like insurance plan, a wager, or many other sorts of financial speculation’ (p. xiv). They suggest that the use of ‘adventure’ to describe:

> economic speculation suggests that extravagance more than economy was the primary category under which financial exploits were understood. The banking and investment innovations of the period had plenty of prudential motives and goals, but their audiences were eager for novelties and thrills as well as for exploitation and gain. (p. xv)

For Cope and Pettit adventure was used to describe commerce because of the *potential* excitement it provided.

What a commercial world should look like was a prominent preoccupation in the eighteenth century. As Dianne Dugaw summarises, ideas of commerce and trade practices were shifting in the early eighteenth century:

> London. Summer of 1720. New words of finance fly about the town from parlor to pub, from Whitehall to Bartholomew Fair: ‘credit’ and ‘commerce’; ‘public fund’, ‘debentures,’ and ‘national debt’; ‘insurance’ and ‘investment’; ‘shares,’ ‘scripts,’ ‘notes,’ ‘bonds,’ ‘gains,’ and ‘stocks’. The South Sea Bubble, part of the first international market crash of investment stocks, is a notable moment in history. With it the Early Modern World slips below the horizon, and our Modern World of venture capitalism comes into view.\(^{93}\)

\(^{90}\) ‘Venturer, n.’ in *OED Online* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, December 2019)


\(^{92}\) Cope and Pettit, p. xi.

Joel Baer similarly argues that ‘a new commercial aggressiveness and the globalisation of trade’ grew in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The idea that ‘new commercial aggressiveness’ emerged is particularly relevant to my reading of predation.

 Debates concurrently arose, concerning virtue, and the question of whether one could be virtuous while also embarking on profit driven ventures. Helen Paul contextualises these debates:

 moral philosophers, such as Shaftesbury argued that virtue was more important than commerce, and that frugality was better than luxury [...] Economic activity was seen as a potential threat to virtue as it was thought to encourage selfishness, which would then undermine society as a whole. Gentlemen were not just superior to tradesmen in social rank, but also in moral stature.

 According to Paul, ‘Mandeville noted that self-interested behaviour could have beneficial results [...] However, only later in the eighteenth century were Enlightenment thinkers such as Rousseau, Kant and Adam Smith able to wrestle with the moral paradoxes created by increased material progress’. Profit driven venture seemed incompatible with contemporary conceptions of virtue for many through much of the eighteenth century. However, as Jonathan Barth observes, this was not a universal position. He notes that ‘for a brief period in the 1690s, a small group of economic dissidents [...] renounce[ed] the supposed tension between public and private interest and trumpet[ed] the acquisitive urge as positively good for any economy’. Ideas of commerce and self-interest interact with the notions of venture explored in this chapter.

 I use the terms ‘adventure’ and ‘venture’ discriminately to reveal the transition obscured in eighteenth-century uses of ‘adventure’. John Baker provides a useful model. He uses adventure to describe ‘a movement that gestures to the future, a going beyond, a breaking of bounds, involving taking risks; it is a form of excess’. Venture, meanwhile, ‘should be understood in the more limited sense of exchange, an undertaking based on economic concerns in which one expects a return on one’s investment and thus is involved with future concerns, with a view to profit’. I similarly refer to adventure as an endeavour involving risk, which might involve travel to unfamiliar spaces. In contrast, I use venture to refer to commercial speculation, where one risks by investing labour, time, or capital.

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94 Baer, *Pirates*, p. 16.
96 Paul, p. 13.
99 Baker, p. 82.
3.4.1 Predation as commerce

The *General History* imagines piracy as an unorthodox commercial venture imbued with a predatory spirit. This predatory character anticipates what commerce might look like, in response to the changing commercial world. A language of commercial venture surrounds piracy: when a pirate company is formed the crew ‘go on the Account’, which Baer summarises as when a sailor ‘agreed to payment by share of the plunder rather than monthly wages’. In some senses, this could be read as a speculative venture. Further, the text explores the reciprocal relationship between piracy and commerce. As Lincoln observes, ‘it was not simply that piracy shared similarities with legitimate business: often a merchant’s business amounted to piracy’.

Peter Leeson interprets the pirate as capitalist, arguing that ‘in the end piracy was a business. It was a criminal business, but a business nonetheless’. His reading of the *General History* is selective. His choice to draw upon Rediker and selected examples from the text downplays the ambiguities and contradictions that emerge from the text’s complex rendering of the pirate figure. Nevertheless, in some ways the text does support his reading, albeit more subtly than Leeson’s inexorable approach indicates. Paying close attention to multiple editions demonstrates how piracy is represented as commerce with a predatory spirit.

The *General History* predominantly characterises predation as an accounting of goods, not as violent encounters. This frames predation as commerce. Encounters with merchant ships follow a set formula: the ship is described, taken, and then destroyed or released. A typical example describes how Blackbeard and his crew:

sailed to Carolina, taking a Brigantine and two Sloops in their Way, where they lay off the Bar of Charles-Town for five or six Days. They took here a Ship as she was coming out, bound for London, commanded by Robert Clark with some passengers on Board for England; the next Day they took another Vessel coming out of Charles-Town, and also two Pinks coming into Charles-Town.

These lists occur frequently throughout the text. Each momentary encounter leads into another with little detail. Some pirates raise the black flag, or fire a warning shot. However, the text rarely describes how pirates take control of a ship, or whether they use violence to control their victims. The text therefore ignores violence in its many clinical descriptions of...
pirate activity. These moments are not about interactions between people. Instead, they focus on logistics: who commands the ships, where they come from, what value they have to the maritime adventurers. The victims are often reduced to the goods they carry. As such, these moments become inventories of pirate endeavour, rather than depictions of violence at sea. They are moments of acquisition, not violent theft.

Multiple captains frame their piracy as an economic venture. Across editions, Avery and Lowther declare a desire to accumulate wealth, while Roberts calls his men ‘Gentlemen of Fortune’. Lowther imagines piracy as venture as he attempts to convince his fellow mutineers to turn pirate:

they had a good Ship under them, a parcel of brave Fellows in her, that it was not their Business to starve, or be made Slaves; and therefore, if they were all of his Mind, they should seek their Fortunes upon the Seas, as other Adventurers had done before them.105

Lowther suggests his men are poor sailors. He expresses a desire to escape poverty and become independent, arguing that their alternative paths are starvation or slavery. However, the final two phrases signal how pirate endeavour is predicated on seeking fortune. In comparing their piracy with ‘other Adventurers [...] before them’ Lowther invokes the Elizabethan privateers who made their fortunes at sea and returned to society with the spoils. Lowther’s speech therefore places the captain of the General History in a historical and literary tradition of maritime adventurers. It compares the pirates to other literary adventurers and historical figures like Drake and Raleigh, who were imagined in literary texts. The abridgements remove the idea that these antecedents were adventurers, but similarly focus upon the potential gains: ‘they had a good ship under them, he proposed to seek their Fortunes upon the seas, as others had before them’.106 This captain proposes a speculative venture, in the hope that they will make money.

Avery’s chapter is consistent with the rest of the text in its imagining of piracy as a quest for fortune. The octavo and compendium iterations include a speech from Avery declaring ‘I am bound to Madagascar, with a Design of making my own Fortune, and that of all the brave Fellows joined with me’.107 This company links pirate activity with making one’s fortune, casting piracy as a speculative venture where the risks and potential rewards are great. The abridgements echo this statement: ‘I am bound to Madagascar, to make my own Fortune as

well as my Companions’. The abridgements remove the word fellow; however, they retain the constitution of piracy as venture. This continuity between editions emphasises the significance of predation as venture.

‘Of Major Stede Bonnet and his Crew’ amplifies the idea that piracy is a venture when it imagines a modality of captaincy driven entirely by commerce. It emphasises that the pirate is an adventurer acting within the commercial sphere, and imagines piracy as an unorthodox commercial venture. The octavo and composite editions describe Bonnet as ‘a Gentleman of good Reputation in the Island of Barbadoes,’ and ‘Master of a plentiful Fortune,’ who ‘had the Advantage of a liberal Education’; while in the abridgements he is a ‘Gentleman of Fortune and Distinction’ who ‘bore the character of a worthy honest Gentleman’. There is a small change in his characterisation here. The use of ‘reputation’ suggests that the character displays appropriate behaviours, while the use of ‘bore’ implies an internalisation of these social expectations. Nevertheless, across editions Bonnet is differentiated from the other captains by his gentlemanly status and his wealth – according to the first octavo he is ‘worth 500l. a year, Real Estate’. Bonnet therefore represents the worrying possibility for the eighteenth-century reader that anyone could turn pirate despite their circumstances. This drastically different character creates a different modality of captaincy.

In this modality the captain turns pirate not because of need or violent disposition, but because piracy is a viable and potentially profitable business opportunity. Bonnet invests his legitimately produced wealth into ‘[fitting] out a sloop with ten guns and 70 men, entirely at his own Expense’. Other pirate endeavours transform a merchant voyage into a pirate venture. By contrast, Bonnet invests money generated within the plantation economy to beget an entirely new company, hoping to generate more wealth. This approach constitutes piracy as a speculative venture. Investment creates both the venture and the position of Captain. Bonnet’s crew does not select or appoint him; no one recognises his status or consents to his leadership. The text does not legitimate his captaincy with the title captain; instead the military rank ‘Major’ precedes his name and heads each page of his chapter. Nevertheless, Bonnet becomes a captain in practice, if not in name.

112 This real estate was likely a plantation. Slavery is therefore the unacknowledged source of Bonnet’s wealth and pirate endeavor. While my purpose is not to discuss the text’s racial politics, it is worth noting that the representation of slaves and slavery challenges egalitarian readings of the pirate.
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In contrast *Brice’s Weekly Journal* creates an alternative Bonnet by condensing his life to two paragraphs:

Major *Stede Bonnet* comes next in Course, who was a Gentleman of good Reputation, and plentiful Fortune; in the Island of *Barbadoes*, before he betook himself to this wicked Course, for which he was but ill qualified, as not understanding maritime Affairs.

Having fitted out a Sloop with 10 Guns and 70 Men, he named her the *Revenge*. And after having made several Cruizes, and taken many Prizes, was taken by Colonel *Rhett of South Carolina*; but afterwards made his Escape; was again taken brought to *Charles-Town in South-Carolina*, where with many others he was arraign’d, convicted, condemned, and executed.\(^{113}\)

This instalment casts Bonnet as a successful captain who takes many ships in the course of his predation. The serialisation emphasises his reputation and wealth, and his place of origin, but does not mention his self-funded enterprise. Therefore, some editions offer Bonnet as exemplary of Leeson’s reading of the pirate, while the serialised form does not bind the pirate so tightly to ideas of predation as commerce. Thinking about predation as venture, instead of analysing piracy as a reflection of a broader structure of economic organisation as Leeson does, clarifies the relations expressed across the *General History* and embeds my analysis more firmly within the text. In constructing predation as commerce the *General History* imagines possibilities that could emerge from a changing world, and gestures towards contemporary debates concerning trade.

3.4.2 Predation as violence

One chapter deliberately counters the prevailing representation of predation. ‘Of Captain Edward Low and his Crew’ suggests some characters are pirates because they are inherently bad. The first octavo shows the slow progress of a pirate captain who deploys violence for seemingly logical reasons into a brutal monster without reason. Initially, it describes how the pirates plunder a sloop, ‘then cut away his Bolt spirit, and all his Rigging, also his Sails from the Yards, and wounded the Master, to prevent his getting in to give Intelligence’.\(^{114}\) This episode deviates a little from the pattern the rest of the text establishes when a brief moment of personal and bodily violence accompanies strategic action. However, increasing levels of violence follow this initial episode. When Low and his company discover English goods aboard a Spanish ship they ‘without any Ceremony, fell Pell-Mell to Execution with their Swords, Cutlashes, Poll-Axes and Pistols, cutting, slashing and shooting the poor *Spaniards* at


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a sad Rate'.\textsuperscript{115} Their predation progresses from injury to murder, and their motivation changes from survival to revenge. Low then begins a violent vendetta against anyone from Boston: in one instance he ‘cut off this Gentleman’s Ears, slit up his Nose, and cut him in several other Places of his Body’ (p. 293). His descent into brutality is complete when he grew wanton in his Cruelties, putting Men to the most exquisite Tortures, if their Behaviour, or even Looks displeased him. He ty’d lighted Matches between Men’s Fingers, belonging to a Sloop bound in to Amboy, whereof William Frazier was Master, till the Flesh was all burnt off: He cut some with Knives and Cutlashes, and took all their Provisions away. (p. 293)

 Violence, specifically violence visited upon those who have not harmed the pirates, comes to define Low’s chapter. The formulaic descriptions decrease as the brutal episodes increase. This iteration of this chapter therefore directly counters the rest of the text. It shows how predation can devolve, bringing into relief the threat of violence that lies underneath other predatory moments. The captain thus influences both the nature of the pirate venture, and a company’s relationship to violence.

In later editions, violence transitions from a strategy deployed by pirates into a defining characteristic of pirates. The second octavo adds sadistic encounters between the first two discussed above, which undercuts the sense of incremental increase. The first sees Low and his company tie a cook to the main-mast of a ship and set it on fire simply because ‘they said, being a greazy Fellow [he] would fry well in the Fire’\textsuperscript{116}. They torture a group of Portuguese passengers by tying them to the fore-yard of the mast ‘but let them down again before they were quite dead, and this they repeated several Times out of Sport’ (p. 374). Their only motivation is amusement. Finally, when he discovers that a captain has thrown a fortune overboard Low ‘ordered the Captain’s Lips to be cut off, which he broil’d before his Face, and afterwards murthered him and all the Crew, being thirty two Persons’ (p. 377). These additional episodes reconstitute the chapter. It becomes a picture of the excesses of piracy, of a character that embodies the worst of these outlaws, rather than an incremental account of how one captain becomes the worst of a bad lot. These moments, alongside the chapter’s account of Low’s childhood, construct an individual who has turned to piracy because he is inherently bad.

The opening of this chapter uses the conventions of criminal biography to suggest that certain characters are destined to become pirates.\textsuperscript{117} The introduction of the General History

\textsuperscript{117} For conventions see Singleton, p. 66.
argues that men turn to piracy through a lack of opportunities and exploitation. However, the text’s sole representation of a captain’s childhood constitutes piracy as innate:

Nature seem’d to have designed him for a Pyrate from his Childhood, very early he began the Trade of plundering, and was wont to raise Contributions among all the Boys of Westminster; and if any were bold enough to refuse it, a Battle was the Consequence; but Low was so hardy, as well as bold, there was no getting the better of him, so that he robbed the Youths of their Farthings with Impunity.

Across editions Low’s childhood echoes a recurrent refrain in criminal biography: that misdemeanour and childhood crime inevitably lead to greater crimes in adulthood. The abridgements condense this moment: ‘Edward Lowe was born at Westminster, who very early began the Trade of Plundering; for if any Child refused him what he had, he must fight him’. They remove the phrase ‘Nature seem’d to have designed him’, thus omitting the gesture to innate character invoked in the octavos. Similarly, they exclude the description of Low as ‘so hardy, as well as bold’. The octavos imbue the young Low with the characteristics valued in captains. They imply that he is somehow innately piratical, whereas the abridgements frame his youthful behaviour as action and choice. However, across editions Low is the only character explored in this way, making the most violent character the one whose childhood destines him to be a pirate. This narrative acts as a counter in both its depiction of violence and account of piracy as destiny.

The structure of Low’s narrative in the second and subsequent octavos also suggests that this chapter is an outlier. The first octavo uses Low’s death to contain his violence when he ‘fell sick and dy’d’. The narrator interjects that ‘I am apt to believe he was cut off by some of his Crew, who lately grew weary of his insolent and tyrannical Government’. This move uses the community to contain the most violent of protagonists and declare him an outlier in the wider pirate fellowship. However, the second octavo amends this resolution: ‘we have had no News concerning him come to England, since this I have now mentioned; but I have heard that he talk’d of going to Brazil’. Low is not given an end, but ‘the best Information we could receive, would be, that he and all his Crew were at the Bottom of the Sea’. This ending diverts from the template of captaincy offered by the General History. The text frequently uses the conclusion of each narrative to contain the protagonists within the pages of the text. As

122 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
Leah Orr demonstrates in her table that charts the endings in the *General History*, the majority of the pirates are given a definitive ending, usually death at the hands of other pirates, an execution, or death at the hands of colonial representatives.\(^{125}\) This convention acts to give a moral ending to the text's complex representations, by reminding the reader that death is the consequence of outlaw activity. However, this is not the case for Low. The most vicious predator exists as a spectre on the edges of his chapter.

Later editions shift agency from the captain to the company. The first octavo describes how Low's Cruelty and Inhumanity to Prisoners that fell into his Hands, was not so generally approved of by the rest of the Pyrates, however criminal they might be in other Respects; nor indeed could all his Barbarities be related, much less beheld without giving Nature a Shock. Among all the lawless Rulers of the Sea, never any came up to him in Cruelty, nor did the dying Groans of those he butchered give him Compunction, or move any Passion in the Brute.\(^{126}\)

Low is positioned as an outlier. The crew's disapproval of his extreme actions and treatment of victims divorces brutality from piracy. It suggests that certain behaviours go beyond the limits pirates set for themselves 'however criminal they might be in other Respects'. The lack of empathy and the suggestion that Low was destined to be a pirate from a young age collectively imply that those who are inherently bad can *be* pirates, not just *act* as pirates.

Approaches to predation therefore distinguish those who *act* as pirates from those who *are* pirates. However, the second octavo extensively amends this section:

> Thus these inhumane Wretches went on, who could not be contented to satisfy their Avarice only, and travel in the common Road of Wickedness; but, like their Patron, the Devil, must make Mischief their Sport, Cruelty their Delight, and damning of Souls their constant Employment. Of all the pyratical Crews that were ever heard of, none of the *English Name* came up to this, in Barbarity; their Mirth and their Anger had much the same Effect, for both were usually gratified with the Cries and Groans of their Prisoners.\(^{127}\)

The first octavo emphasises Low's inhumanity, and suggests that his violence goes too far for his piratical fellows. However, the second octavo depicts a vicious crew who supplant the brutal captain. It replaces a singular extreme protagonist with an entire crew that make 'Cruelty their Delight'. They represent the dangers of a company committed to predation as violence, rather than as acquisition. Changes in this excerpt diminish Low's position as an example of the extremes of captaincy, and transition the chapter as a whole into a warning about the excesses of piracy as violence.


By contrast, the 1734 edition adds a chapter that suggests extreme violence is innately piratical. Paraphrasing a 1726 pamphlet, *Unparallel’d Cruelty; or the Tryal of Captain Jeane*, ‘The Life of Captain John Jaen’ depicts a merchant who does not rob upon the high seas. Yet, the narrative asserts that ‘the said Circumstances, and his suffering for a Crime committed on the High Seas, makes this a properer Place for what we have to say concerning him, than any other in the Book’. The compendium suggests that this account belongs with pirate narratives because all crime at sea is somehow piratical. However, this placement also implies that extreme violence at sea is somehow innately piratical. The text vividly describes Jaen’s actions:

he either whipp’d the Boy himself, or caused him to be whipp’d, [...] he caused him to be ty’d to the Main Mast with Ropes for nine Days [...] whipping him with a Cat, [...] till he was bloody, and then causing his Wounds to be several times wash’d with Brine and Pickle; [...] stamping on him, beating him, and abusing him, nay even obliging him to eat his own Excrements, [...] the said Captain in Derision took a Glass, carried it into the Cabin and made Water therein, and then brought it to the Boy to drink, [...] continued to treat him with the same Barbarity, by whipping, pickling, kicking, beating and bruising him, [...] on the very last Day of his said Life, he gave him eighteenth Lashes with the aforesaid Cat of five Tails, in a little Time after which the un happy Wretch dy’d. (p. 305)

This is by far the longest and most brutal depiction of violence across editions. Jaen justifies his inhumane conduct as a form of discipline: ‘he never intended to murder the Boy, but only to correct him as he deserved, he being exceedingly wicked and ungovernable’ (p. 306). This chapter provides an alternative way of thinking about the violence of the captain. It exemplifies the sort of brutality non-pirate captains could perpetrate, making pirate captains look less brutal in comparison. Yet, the text suggests that excessive violence against one’s crew is a characteristic of the pirate captain by including it in the piracy section. It affirms the transition across editions expressed in the Low chapter, which sees violence change from a strategy employed by the captain to a defining characteristic of the pirate captain.

### 3.5 Captains, outlaw leaders, and highwaymen

Placing scholarship on the pirate’s outlaw antecedents and highwayman contemporaries in conversation with my reading of the *General History* illuminates the absence of chivalric ethos and the significance of commerce in the *General History’s* pirate captain. Comparing these figures highlights how the pirate captain offers a new imagining of the outlaw. It allows me to highlight how the captain differs from his highwayman contemporaries, by focusing on how he is positioned as an adventurer who embarks upon ventures.

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The protagonist of *A Geste of Robyn Hode* is imbued with the ethic of chivalric literature. Robin Hood is a highly malleable protagonist, as Neil Cartlidge asserts:

> it is fundamental that he is an outlaw, and that he is associated with the forest, but very few of the other features sometimes ascribed to him are wholly undetachable from his identity, and indeed many of them have only a relatively short history.\(^{129}\)

Cartlidge argues that outlawry and an association with the forest are the only essential characteristics of Hood. Many aspects that seem integral in modern cultural productions, such as stealing from the rich to give to the poor, are seventeenth- and eighteenth-century inventions.\(^{130}\) Knight similarly argues that contemporary concerns can be mapped upon Hood precisely because: ‘he possesses no depths in which the reader can see reflected their own wished for subtlety; the stories reveal no internal niceties of character on which we can critically ruminate’.\(^{131}\) Hood is deployed to serve different purposes across narratives. The ‘outlaw romance’ iteration of Hood, for example, echoes the knights of contemporary literature. Spraggs argues that *A Geste of Robyn Hode* affords the character ‘many of the attributes that would be appropriate to a hero of chivalry’.\(^{132}\) She describes these ‘chivalric attributes’: ‘he is a proud outlaw, and the most courteous outlaw that there ever was’, he is so devout that he hears mass ‘not just once [a day] (as enjoined by the rules of knighthood) but three times’, and ‘he is honourable in his treatment of women, and will never attack a company in which a woman is travelling’.\(^{133}\) In contrast, the pirate protagonists of the *General History* are not devout, or courteous, and have no problem with the presence of women aboard target vessels. This reading of Hood suggests that pirate captains are not chivalric outlaws. Instead, the text expresses a chivalric ethos through ideas of fellowship, discussed in chapter two.

Displays of chivalry evolve into performances of gentility, as the outlaw is re-imagined as the eighteenth-century highwayman. Robert Shoemaker observes that ‘although many of the justifications for highway robbery originated in older traditions of celebrating outlaws, the specific image of the polite gentleman highwayman was an eighteenth-century creation,’ that ‘emerged in response to the identification of ‘street-robbery’ as a particularly threatening type of crime in the 1720s’.\(^{134}\) Shoemaker suggests that ‘assertions about highwaymen’s gentility were often accompanied by claims [...] that they treated their victims with good

\(^{129}\) Cartlidge, p. 16.

\(^{130}\) Knight, *Robin Hood: A Complete Study*, pp. 115–52.

\(^{131}\) Knight, *Robin Hood: A Complete Study*, p. 2.

\(^{132}\) Spraggs, p. 60.

\(^{133}\) Spraggs, pp. 59–60.

manners’. Spraggs argues that Macheath is ‘an evocation of a powerful tradition. Behind him looms the figure of the heroic robber’. Accordingly, he ‘acquires the debonair manners of Claude du Vall, the ingenuity and courage of Captain Hind, and is therefore ‘invested with all the mystique of the ‘gentleman thief’.

Some scholars have argued that challenging the notion of the gentleman highwayman is key to the satire of the Beggar’s Opera. However, according to Spraggs, the satirical nature of the play does not fully undercut Macheath’s characterisation:

True, his attempts at playing the gentleman are less than completely successful; true, his courage in the condemned cell comes, as he himself acknowledges, out of a bottle; but in both instances, we can find his behaviour touching as much as ridiculous. The highwayman’s swagger, his sexual magnetism, his generosity and loyalty to his friends are all left largely unmocked.

Interpreting the highwayman’s claims of gentility as purely satirical obscures how these claims look back to the medieval outlaw and his chivalric ethos. Instead, balancing satiric and romantic readings of this figure allows me to explore how pirate and highwayman protagonists intersect.

Scholarship about this highwayman illuminates the subtleties of the captain’s relationship to commerce and venture imagined by the General History. The Beggar’s Opera distances the highwayman from predation as commerce, whereas the inverse is true of the captains of the General History. Predation and acquisition are moved to the margins of the text, ‘in this play about criminals’ where ‘no crime takes place on stage’. The characters prepare to steal, and are jubilant in the wake of their successful robbery, but any robbery occurs off stage. Predation is pushed to the margins and protagonists are distanced from the commerce required to profit from predation.

The commercial side of predation is instead embodied through the fence, Peachum, who plays ‘the villainous foil to Macheath’. As Spraggs observes:

Peachum speaks almost entirely in the language of profit and trade, and he is most often seen in the company of an account book. So far as he is concerned, selling his friends and acquaintances for blood money is simply a matter of ‘Business’.

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136 Spraggs, p. 207.
137 Spraggs, p. 207.
139 Spraggs, p. 207.
140 Spraggs, p. 208.
142 Spraggs, p. 201.
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Peachum represents the commercial nature of illicit activity, while Macheath is associated with romance and gentility. According to Spraggs, the *Beggar’s Opera* uses two distinct languages to separate robbery from its commercialisation: ‘where the commercially minded Peachum speaks mainly of business and profit, Macheath is inclined to talk about ‘Honour’, the gentleman’s supreme attribute’ (p. 202). The highwayman therefore ‘represents the gentry’ and satirises upper class gentility (p. 202). As Denning comments, through Macheath ‘the aristocracy and court are no longer an alternative to the money of the City but a parasite on it’. In contrast, the fence ‘represent[s] the underworld equivalent of a profit-orientated, complacent middle class’, which satirises a developing world of commerce that only sees value through monetary evaluation. The representation of predation distinguishes the captain and the highwayman. The highwayman is dissociated from how stolen goods are transformed into profit through the insertion of the fence, whereas the act of predation becomes commerce in the *General History*’s rendering of the pirate as protagonist.

The highwayman-turned-pirate is similarly distanced from predation in Gay’s sequel, *Polly*. These pirates talk about predation, but there is no evidence that they are ‘ravaging and plund’ring the country’ played out on stage. Accordingly, Macheath as the pirate captain Morano fails as a predator. Robert Dryden argues that Macheath-as-Morano lacks success as both a leader and man, suggesting that ‘he is rendered impotent, unable to perform for his pirate band and also unable to perform for Jenny’. Macheath-as-Morano is an ineffective pirate because he attempts to pirate like a highwayman – with a performance of gentility and deference to his wife. Morano no longer represents the upper class values satirised in the *Beggar’s Opera*, yet Gay does not reconfigure him as a commercial actor.

Instead, *Polly*’s other characters critically engage with ideas of predation as commerce and the excesses of free trade. Dryden argues that Ducat ‘is Gay’s representation of a stereotypical colonial merchant, a business man of the colonies whose first concerns are profit and luxuries’ (p. 548). Ducat represents the merchant as a successful fortune hunter and colonial administrator, where colonial administration ‘takes the form of a business relationship with the Indians who are paid protectors of the English’ (p. 550). This outlines a fundamental difference in the exploration of a relationship between commerce and the pirate captain in *Polly* and the *General History*: ‘Gay’s pirate is the poor subject in this capitalist economy’ while Johnson’s pirates are active participants in commerce as a predatory act.

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143 Denning, p. 47.
Gay's plays associate commerce with non-outlawed characters and dissociate both the pirate and the highwayman from predation in favour of focusing on domestic relationships between the outlaw and women. These representations of both the highwayman and the pirate illuminate the captains of the General History as representations of commerce imbued with a predatory spirit.

### 3.6 Imagining the captain as an egalitarian figure

The General History complicates its imagining of the captain by offering varied depictions of the path to captaincy. Some examples, like those explored above, create the captain as a venturer. However, selected characters are used to explore the idea that the captain is a predatory figure that nonetheless has a relationship with egalitarianism. Rediker reads these egalitarian principles as a genuine commitment to radical social organisation, while Frohock suggests they are central to the satire of the text. I suggest that this ambiguity contributes to the text’s complex literary figuring of the captain. This particular route to captaincy, where the captain is elected by mutineers, is offered neither as a serious endorsement of egalitarian principles, nor as a complete parody of these notions.

Across editions Davis is imagined in this egalitarian mode. The octavo and abridged editions highlight selection and consent when Davis prompts the creation of a pirate fellowship through mutiny, as I discuss in chapter two. This company then calls ‘a Counsel of war’ where:

over a large Bowl of Punch, at which it was proposed to chuse a Commander; the Election was soon over, for it fell upon Davis by a great Majority of legal Pollers, there was no Scrutiny demanded, for all acquiesced in the Choice.

The abridgements convey the same process: ‘Davis was chosen Commander by a small Majority’ and was confirmed ‘by universal consent’ in the 1725 abridgement, and ‘by the consent of all’ in the 1729 abridgement. The company select and appoint Davis across editions. These editions differ in their assessment of his majority, however. A large majority implies that he is a popular leader who effectively displays the characteristics valued by the former pirates as he fronts their mutiny. A small majority, by contrast, suggests a less enthusiastic perception of his leadership. Nevertheless, these iterations assert that a sailor becomes a captain when the majority of their companions decide they are fit for the position. The crew confirm the validity of this process when they consent to his appointment. I call this

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147 Rediker, Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age; Frohock, ‘Satire and Civil Governance in A General History of the Pyrates (1724, 1726)’.
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a ‘mutineer election’ modality of captaincy. Mutiny ties ideas of fellowship to this egalitarian model, and suggests that fellowship creates the conditions wherein the company can elect a leader. This ties selected captaincies specifically to the ideas of commonality, fidelity, and fellow feeling explored in chapter two.

This modality of captaincy extends beyond Davis’s chapter. ‘Of Captain Bartho Roberts and his crew’ continues the narrative of this company with the election of a new leader: ‘Roberts had behaved so well before this Accident, (tho’ he had not been above six Weeks among them,) that he was by a great Majority elected Captain’.150 Once again, a substantial majority elect the captain in a company founded by mutiny, suggesting broader continuities in the social organisation of piracy in this company. Davis's election creates a company organised around consent and fellowship; Roberts’s election maintains and strengthens it. The organising principles of a company instigate how a pirate becomes captain, and establish a precedent for how subsequent leaders are appointed until the company is dissolved or destroyed.

Crucially, the ‘mutineer election’ modality frames piracy as social rebellion as well as a means of economic acquisition. Davis’s election is followed by ‘a short Speech, the Sum of which, was, a Declaration of War against the whole World’.151 These pirates set out to disrupt the fortunes of any and all others through the predatory acquisition of material goods. In declaring 'War against the whole World' Davis and his company reject all social norms and conventional social organisation.

Frohock challenges readings that approach the General History as a sincere reflection of real life radical social organisation. He calls the text a ‘satirical rendering of pirate history’ that does not offer an unambiguous portrait of pirate radicalism and reform ambitions; rather, it uses the pirate adventure as a trope for imagining the possibilities and problems of remaking civil society in an age when Atlantic travel and trade economies were opening new spaces for, and new ways of imagining, civil government.152

Frohock suggests that radical readings do not account for the tensions within the text; the narratives ‘that seem most to herald pirates’ interest in democratic organization and principles of equality’ introduce ‘degrees of ambivalence’ that complicate or temper radical sentiments (p. 468). Instead, he reads the General History as ‘a double satire’ that targets both pirates and the society they are positioned against:

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152 Frohock, ‘Satire and Civil Governance in A General History of the Pyrates (1724, 1726)’, p. 478.
[it upholds] the pirates’ view that mainstream society is structured to privilege the rich and the powerful at the expense of the weak and disadvantaged while simultaneously mocking pirates themselves as common criminals who cannot – and often intend not – to live up to their principled claims. (p. 468)

Frohock points to Roberts’s chapter as a particular example of how the text deploys narrative voice to challenge sincerity and satirically undercut ‘the political aspirations of pirates’ (p. 474). He argues that these interventions offer a ‘mocking commentary’ on Roberts’ ‘Articles’, which claim ‘that the pirates regularly broke their own laws for private advantage’ (p. 474). He further suggests that the egalitarian principles expressed in Roberts’ election are undermined when Roberts ‘[secures] for himself more power than the articles allow through intimidation, violence and a privy council of bullies he forms to help him implement his will’ (p. 474). I would also add that endings compound the ambivalence introduced throughout the narrative. The captains that show a commitment to egalitarian principles are contained within the text’s conventions – Roberts is killed in an engagement with a man of war, while Davis is killed in an ambush.

The General History’s mutineer-elected captains, then, are not endorsements of a new, egalitarian mode of social organisation. The tension introduced through interventions and the narrative itself support satiric readings of these characters. And yet, the text resists exclusively satiric readings in equal measure. Ideas of the mock-heroic help to cut across these tensions. Rather than arguing whether the text is or is not entirely a satire, I suggest that this is about a tension in values. The General History engages with older ideas of the adventure hero in its treatment of a modern topic – predation constituted as commerce. However, affinities to the mock-heroic do not undercut the idea that the captain is a new form of the adventurer. Egalitarian captains display the affective qualities of early modern heroes. They are also successful predators – Roberts is the most successful of all of the captains.153 Looking across editions, egalitarian captains follow the same trajectory as their authoritarian fellows. Their captaincies are not destabilised entirely, and they consistently express a commitment to fellowship.

### 3.7 Pirate and non-pirate captains

The relationship between pirate and non-pirate captains undermines inexorably satirical readings. The word “captain” was used in military and civilian contexts throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to denote an individual in command in some capacity.

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It was consistently used to describe the commanders of naval, privateer, and merchant ships. In the navy properly the only captains were post captains [who] commanded the rated or “post” ships (that is, the largest ones), but “masters and commanders” were always called “captain” as indeed were most officers commanding vessels of any size, even in the merchant service.\footnote{Rodger, p. 18.}

While post captain was an official rank, ‘it was quite correct for the masters and commanders who commanded the smaller men of war to be addressed as “captain” as though they had reached post rank, and though they had not, they shared the lonely responsibilities of command’ (p. 18). ‘Captain’ denoted someone in command of a ship, regardless of rank. It is this position of command that I analyse, not the formally bestowed rank.

Roger suggests that the captain did not have unassailable authority. He comments that:

> all captains would have echoed [the opinion of one Captain Mackenzie] of the importance of ‘that confidence and affection of the people I have under my command, which every man who has the honour of commanding one of his Majesty's ships would be glad of acquiring in peace, much more so in war’. (p. 120)

This argument about maintaining good relations and loyalty implies that securing the good favour of the crew was integral to leadership. It also emphasises that a crew must have confidence in the abilities of their captain. According to Rodger, the connection between captain and crew was essential to naval success. He argues that ‘the officers and men of the Navy were bound together by invisible but tenacious bonds, of which the relationships between followers and leaders, together with that between shipmates, were the strongest’ (p. 124). In the eighteenth-century maritime sphere success and good captain-crew relations were built upon the abilities and charisma of the captain. That the support of the crew was so essential to maritime success suggests that a captain had to prove himself worthy of command – he was not imbued with authority by virtue of his position.

### 3.7.1 The General History generates a non-pirate captain as the anti-pirate

Merchant, naval and privateer captains sit on one side of the malleable line between legal and illegal action at sea, while the pirate captain exists on the other, as they are denied the protection of the law. Historical non-pirate captains produce conventions of captaincy that the General History’s literary account of pirate leadership deploys and complicates. Many of the numerous non-pirate captains named in the General History are not fully realised characters. Instead, they are part of the text’s accounting of pirate accumulation, listed alongside the ship’s name, ports of egress and entry, and goods taken. A small number of more realised captains are depicted in the form of specific naval officers. Lieutenant Maynard,
Colonel William Rhet, and Captain Holford collectively generate an image of the non-pirate captain in this text.

Courage and resolve are central to the General History's construction of the non-pirate captain. Courage was important for historical examples of the captain, as Rodger notes: 'it is clear enough that courage was one quality that officers expected of one another, and of themselves, and that they were quick to resent any implication that it might be lacking' (p. 248). The octavo and compendium editions of the General History use the narrator's interventions to emphasise these characteristics in Lieutenant Maynard, while the abridgements convey them through his actions. The octavos and compendium praise Maynard for killing Blackbeard, whose 'Destruction [...] was entirely owing to the Bravery and Conduct of Lieutenant Maynard, and his men'. The narrator asserts that conditions were 'enough to have turn'd back any Gentleman without Dishonour, who was less resolute and bold than this lieutenant'. The compendium replaces 'who was less' with 'who had been less', a small difference that in the former conceptualizes courage as innate character, while the latter frames it as an action or behaviour. Nevertheless, courage is emphasised explicitly here and implicitly in the bloody battle with Blackbeard. In contrast, the abridgements omit this intervention. Instead action expresses the non-pirate captain's courage. In this encounter 'The Lieutenant and Blackbeard fir’d first at each other, and they then went to it sword in hand'. This description of the conflict foregrounds Maynard; once Blackbeard's crew call for quarters 'the lieutenant attacked the men with equal Bravery that remained in the Sloop, and took them'. His actions show him to be brave, resolute, and smart. Thus, the octavos and compendium use the narrator to make explicit statements, while the abridgements use action. The encounter between Maynard and Blackbeard is structured according to the conventions of the text, where normative captains suppress the threat of the pirate outlaw through violent encounter. It also emphasises shared values across these two types of captain - that courage should be displayed to an absolute extreme.

The General History differentiates the non-pirate captain and the pirate captain by embedding the former into a naval hierarchy. Maynard is neither a common sailor, nor a fellow. Instead, across editions he is 'the most junior commissioned officer', a 'first lieutenant'. The octavos...
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fully embed him in normative structures when they call him ‘an experienced officer, and a Gentleman of great Bravery and Resolution’. He is fully assimilated, while the pirates of the General History are outlaws.

Crucially, the non-pirate captain is most prominently defined through a negative relation to pirates. He is imagined as the anti-pirate, not as the embodiment of a distinct set of characteristics. In the octavos Maynard responds to Blackbeard’s question: ‘Damn you for Villains, who are you? And, from whence came you? with ‘You may see by our Colours, we are no pyrates’. Maynard signals his position as a non-pirate captain by displaying flags, and by declaring that he and his men ‘are no pirates’. In contrast, the 1725 abridgement removes the reference to flags, while the 1729 abridgement omits the whole encounter. Maynard and his men are not pirates in the earliest abridgement, while in the octavo he identifies himself as a navy man and British colonial, which means that he is not a pirate. The General History therefore offers three variations of his identity: in the first he is not a pirate due to his declared allegiance, the second specifically asserts that he is not a pirate, whilst the third ties his identity exclusively to his rank. Through Maynard the text signals that the non-pirate captain is defined by their relationship to the pirate, in all but one edition. Non-pirate captains are defined by what they are not – they are not denied the protection of the law.

Multiple chapters further solidify the non-pirate captain as ‘not a pirate’ by positioning him as a pirate hunter. Maynard is not just ‘not a pirate’, but is also a hunter of pirates. Similarly, a military man, Colonel William Rhet, is given a maritime commission in the octavo and compendium editions for the express purpose of hunting pirates: ‘Colonel William Rhet, of [South Carolina], waited on the Governor, and generously offered himself to go with two Sloops to Attack this Pyrate; which the Governor readily accepted of’. Likewise, in the abridgements: ‘Colonel William Rhet offered to go with two Sloops to attack them; which being by the Governour and Council approved of, he was commissioned on board the Henry’. He is an example of a successful non-pirate captain. Rhet is both dedicated and effective as he pursues both Vane and Bonnet. This non-pirate captain is not a seaman. Instead he is someone with military experience who wants to hunt pirates. Therefore, the non-pirate captain is not defined by his relationship to the sea space or to landscape.

162 The History and Lives 1st Edition, p. 34.
Through Maynard we are also offered the captain as persecutor of pirate co-conspirators. In the octavo and compendium editions Maynard 'made bold to seize in the Governor's Store House, the sixty Hogsheads of Sugar, and from honest Mr. Knight, twenty, which it seems was their Dividend of the Plunder taken in the French Ship'. Similarly, in the abridgements 'he seized, in the Governour's Store house, the Sixty Hogsheads of Sugar, and Mr Knight his Secretary's 20, which was their Dividend of the Plunder taken in the French Ship'. Across all iterations the non-pirate captain shows that enjoying the spoils of piracy is corrupt and deserves punishment. Maynard is so committed to the pursuit of pirates, that he pursues their companions on land.

The General History affirms the non-pirate captain as pirate hunter through a character who is complicit in a pirate captain’s continued freedom. While Maynard and Rhet display an unwavering commitment to the pursuit of pirates, an encounter between Vane and Captain Holford challenges, but ultimately upholds, the non-pirate captain’s purpose as pirate captor. The text is ambiguous as to whether Holford is a naval captain, a merchant captain, or privateersman. The octavos describes how ‘A Ship put in’ onto an island where Vane is stranded, ‘the captain of which, one Holford, an old Buccaneer, happened to be Vane’s Acquaintance’. Similarly in the abridgements: ‘a Sloop from Jamaica put in for water, Holford Captain’. Holford does not initially display Maynard or Rhet’s zeal for pirate capture. The abridgements tell us that Holford ‘would have nothing to say to [Vane]’, while the octavo iterations recount an extended interaction between the two men. Vane asks Holford for transport off the island ‘but he absolutely refused him, saying to him, Charles, I shan’t trust you aboard my Ship, unless I carry you a Prisoner’. Holford gives the pirate an opportunity to escape however, telling Vane:

he might easily find a Way to get off, if he had a Mind to it: I am now going down the Bay, says he, and shall return hither, in about a Month; and if I find you upon the Island when I come back, I'll carry you to Jamaica and hang you.

In allowing Vane a month to escape the island, this version of Holford is complicit. He could plausibly have imprisoned Vane during this initial encounter, but instead even suggests Vane

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169 Ibid.


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could steal to escape.\textsuperscript{172} The ship Vane eventually gains passage on under false pretences encounters Holford’s ship and Vane’s identity is revealed: ‘\textit{I tell you, says Captain Holford, it is Vane the notorious Pyrate. If it be him, replies the other [captain], I won’t keep him: Why then, says Holford, I’ll send and take him aboard, and Surrender him at Jamaica}.’\textsuperscript{173} The abridgements offer a similar account of the second interaction.\textsuperscript{174} Across editions Vane is consequently imprisoned, tried, and executed. However, in omitting the encounter between Holford and Vane the abridged \textit{General History} presents Holford as a dedicated captor of pirates. In comparison the octavos and compendium imagine a complicit captain who captures the pirate because it suits his current circumstances. Holford moves across the spectrum of captaincy within this ten-year period, but ultimately affirms the non-pirate captain’s pirate hunter role across editions.

The second volume’s appendix adds ambiguity to the non-pirate captain. Amendments to the episodes that close the Blackbeard chapter question the legitimacy of the action that results in his death:

As to the secret expedition from Virginia, undertaken by the Governor and the two captains of men of war, they had their secret Views in it: The Men of War had lain up these ten months whilst the pyrates infested the coast, and did great mischief. For which, tis likely, they might have been called to an Account; but the success of the enterprise against Teach alias Blackbeard perhaps prevented such an enquiry.\textsuperscript{175}

While Maynard is not directly referenced here, this section questions the motivation and efficacy of his force. The excursion is reframed as a ‘secret expedition’ that coincidentally forestalls any questions about their lack of action in the preceding ten months. By reframing this moment the text suggests that the non-pirate captain is a furtive and self-serving individual who also embarks upon self-interested ventures. This section also uses the rhetorical device of subsequent reports to exonerate Governor Eden:

Upon a Review of this part of Blackbeard’s story, it does not seem, by any Matters of Fact candidly considered, that the said Governour held any private or criminal correspondence with this Pyrate; and I have been informed since, by very good Hands, that Mr Eden always behaved, as far as he had power, in a Manner suitable to his Post, and bore the character of a good Governour, and an honest Man.\textsuperscript{176}

This addition raises questions about the character and actions of Maynard by challenging his prosecution of Eden as a co-conspirator. This section of the appendix takes great pains to explain the legitimacy of Eden’s actions, and his interactions with Blackbeard. These amendments to the \textit{General History} therefore begin to complicate our understanding of the

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{174} The \textit{History and Lives} 1st Edition, p. 58; The \textit{History and Lives 3rd Edition}, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{175} Captain Charles Johnson, \textit{The History of the Pyrates: Second Volume}, p. 319.
\textsuperscript{176} Captain Charles Johnson, \textit{The History of the Pyrates: Second Volume}, p. 317.
ethics of the *General History*s non-pirate captain. However, the captain as the anti-pirate remains key to understandings of the non-pirate captain across iterations of the first volume.

### 3.7.2 Similarities between non-pirate and pirate captains emphasise that captaincy is a spectrum

Merchant, naval, and privateer captains are not pirates in the *General History*; however, there are moments in this ten-year period where the pirate captain closely mirrors his non-pirate counterparts. The second and subsequent octavos particularly amplify this congruence by replacing radical captaincies with more conventional accounts. Blackbeard’s early life and ascent to captaincy, which differ in the first and the second octavos, exemplify this move. In the first octavo, he becomes a pirate when he ‘shipp’d himself as a Foremast Man’ on Bonnet’s ship.\(^{177}\) He remains a member of the crew until they depose Bonnet ‘from the command, and by common consent they placed [...] Thatch in his Room’.\(^{178}\) They collectively appoint Thatch after declaring that Bonnet is an unsuitable commander. In the first octavo Blackbeard follows the mutineer elected path to captaincy, where leadership is conferred from below, and requires consent of the community. However, the second octavo constructs an alternative modality where Captains appoint their successors. It depicts a process of hierarchical succession that mimics naval promotion when Thatch becomes Teach.\(^{179}\)

According to the National Museum of the Royal Navy, a lieutenant started as ‘an understudy to the captain in case of accident or illness’ then ‘on promotion from lieutenant, officers were appointed to a small ship, e.g. sloop, cutter etc’.\(^{180}\) Then, ‘after sufficient experience, the officer could be given command of a rated ship’ (p. 2). The second and subsequent octavos replicate this system when Teach transitions from sailor to captain. Teach begins his life as a pirate as a former privateersman sailing under Benjamin Hornigold, then is appointed as a subordinate leader in command of a prize ship under Horningold’s leadership: ‘Captain Benjamin Horningold put him into a Sloop that he had made prize of, and with whom he continued in Consortship’.\(^{181}\) Teach then rises again when they take command of a larger ship and ‘by Horningold’s consent, Teach went aboard [...] as Captain’.\(^{182}\) Horningold then leaves the company, making Teach the sole leader of the endeavour. Teach makes an incremental

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\(^{179}\) While ‘the current naval rankings have been precisely defined for only forty years’ the NMRN traces the history of certain positions back to 1580 and 1620. (National Museum of the Royal Navy, *Naval Ranks Information Sheet 096*, (Portsmouth; National Museum of the Royal Navy, 2014) p. 2 <https://www.nmrn-portsmouth.org.uk/sites/default/files/Naval%20Ranks_0.pdf> p. 1).  
\(^{180}\) *Naval Ranks Information Sheet 096*, p. 2 – 3.  
ascent in this iteration, which replicates notions of hierarchy and appointment from above. This model of leadership requires the recognition of a superior – someone who is already a captain to bestow the title. Therefore, both the mutineer election and the hierarchical modalities of captaincy require the recognition and assent either from the pirate company or from a superior. However, in gradually promoting Teach the General History neutralises certain radical elements of the text between editions. A captain appointed within a hierarchy endorsed by a successful pirate captain replaces a mutinying captain elected by his fellows.

The second octavo also introduces internal hierarchy in Davis’s chapter that tempers how radical his captaincy is. In the first octavo a select number of pirates are called ‘officers’ in passing, and there is no mention of any privileges afforded to them. In contrast, the second octavo creates a new category of pirate in the second octavo:

other principal Pyrates, who, by the Way, had assumed the Title of Lords, and as such took upon them to advise or counsel their Captain upon any important Occasion; and likewise held certain Privileges, which the common Pyrates were debarr’d from.

These pirates impose conventional structures upon the ship by adopting a title tied to feudalism and aristocracy. The title and associated benefits distinguish these men from the ‘common pirates’. This company is therefore no longer entirely egalitarian. Crucially, these men appoint themselves. While the chapter begins by stressing the consent of all, it ends with the development of a self-appointed higher class of pirate.

This separate class of pirates influence the election of their next captain. The first candidates for captaincy: ‘were distinguish’d by the Title of Lords, such were Sympson, Ashplant, Anstis’. However, Lord Dennis sets out where power lies:

That it was not of any great Signification who was dignify’d with Title; for really and in Truth, all good Governments had (like theirs) the supream Power lodged with the Community, who might doubtless depute and revoke as suited Interest or Humour. We are the Original of this Claim (says he) and should a Captain be so sawcy as to exceed Prescription at any time, why down with Him!

So, while the second octavo emphasises the importance of hierarchy in the organisation of men, it also adds a radical statement that challenges authoritarian notions of leadership. It suggests that no leader in a ‘good government’ has any kind of power – instead it resides in the community. However, underlying this moment is a conventional process where a lord chooses a candidate, and convinces his fellows to agree. Roberts is not a lord, but he is anointed and approved by one and ‘the Choice was confirm’d both by the Lords and

Commoners'. \(^{187}\) Both the lords and common pirates constitute separate parties that must consent to their commander. Even the most egalitarian of companies echo the structures used by their non-pirate counterparts.

Revisions to Bonnet's chapter similarly reinforce the significance of hierarchical succession. The second octavo establishes Bonnet's ineptitude in command; however, his crew do not mutiny in this iteration. Instead, his captaincy is challenged when the company meet Teach. After a few days 'Teach, finding that Bonnet knew nothing of Maritime Life, with the consent of [Bonnet's] men, put in another captain, one Richards, to command Bonnet's Sloop'. \(^{188}\) The second octavo reinforces captaincy as a status bestowed by others, when it replaces a self-appointed captain with one installed by hierarchical succession. Teach can replace Bonnet with one of his men because he is the 'Superior in Roguery'. \(^{189}\) However, he is not able to entirely impose his will, as the inclusion of consent underlines the importance of recognition. Even in this circumstance, when an outsider takes command of a company, the consent of the crew is central to the process of taking command.

Comparing the first and second octavos shows how the text replaces two radical modalities of captaincy (the self-appointed and the elected mutineer) with two narrative accounts that reinforce hierarchy and appointment from above. Even the most egalitarian of captains relies on hierarchy in the second and subsequent octavos. This move would suggest that the radical text is made more conservative through revision.

Placing the pirate and non-pirate captain in conversation reveals how Blackbeard shifts across the spectrum of captaincy in this ten-year period. Amendments to the second volume develop the representation of Blackbeard as a normative character. As we shall see, this Blackbeard uses the strategies employed by states to maintain his command:

The pyrates had obtained such an Acquisition of Strength, that they were in no concern about preserving themselves from the Justice of Laws, but of advancing their Power, and maintaining their Sovereignty, not over the seas only, but to stretch their Dominions to the Plantations themselves, [...] the Pyrates freely owned [...] never endeavour'd to conceal their names of Habitations, as if they had been inhabitants of a legal Commonwealth, and were resolved to treat with all the World on the Foot of a free State; and all judicial Acts went in the Name of Teach. \(^{190}\)

The text mocks the idea that the pirates could claim sovereignty through the reminder that they are not 'inhabitants of a legal commonwealth'. It challenges their claims by implying that they should be subject to 'the Justice of Laws'. There is irony in the idea that pirates could

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claim sovereignty and authority over any space because they have outlawed themselves. However, by making these claims the pirates invoke strategies used by the state to enforce sovereignty. As Charles Tilly argues, ‘banditry, piracy, gangland rivalry, policing, and war making all belong on the same continuum’.191 He observes that ‘governments stand out from other organizations by their tendency to monopolize the concentrated means of violence’.192 This section of the General History articulates how the use of violence is central to state making. According to Tilly:

The uncertain, elastic line between ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ violence appeared in the upper reaches of power. Early in the state-making process, many parties shared the right to use violence, its actual employment, or both at once. The long love-hate affair between aspiring state makers and pirates or bandits illustrates the division.193

Reading this Blackbeard alongside Tilly’s analysis further supports my idea that the General History offers a spectrum of captaincy, in which ideas of legitimate and illegitimate violence play a part. It links to the oft-quoted Cicero anecdote explained by Johns, about a pirate who tells Alexander the Great that they employ the same tactics ‘But because I do it with a tiny craft, I’m called a pirate: because you have a mighty navy, you’re called an emperor’.194 This section begins to reframe Blackbeard as one of the unconventional men that form the vanguard of empire in early narratives. This section amplifies the normative reading that emerges from select versions of the General History, and emphasises the need for analysis of Blackbeard driven by multiple editions of the text.

This section of the appendix also imagines a Blackbeard who is no longer a pirate. It rewrites the motivations and actions of colonial authorities to instead frame him as a gang leader:

the French Ship was lawfully condemned, as has been said before, and if he had committed any Depredations against the planters, as they seem’d to complain of, they were not upon the high sea, but either in the River, or on Shore, and could not come within the Jurisdiction of the Admiralty, nor under any Laws of Pyracy.195

This extract suggests that the excursion to capture Blackbeard is illegitimate because he did not commit any acts of piracy after accepting a pardon. According to the narrator’s direct intervention, Blackbeard’s alleged mistreatment of the planters is not piracy. I use the word ‘alleged’ here to reflect the careful language used in the passage, which questions the legitimacy of Maynard’s action. The phrase ‘if he had committed any Depredations’ rhetorically raises the possibility of the opposite, while ‘as they seem’d to complain of’

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192 Tilly, p. 171.
193 Tilly, p. 173.
194 Johns, p. 36.
challenges the existence of these complaints. The section then introduces further reservations of a legal nature, by suggesting that, even if these allegations were valid, the Admiralty would not be responsible for prosecuting them. This all comes together to construct a character that has abided by the terms of his pardon, and is therefore no longer a pirate. Instead, he becomes the leader of a gang acting on land and in territorial waters. This has two effects. First, it questions the legitimacy of those acting under the authority of the admiralty. Secondly, and more importantly for my reading of the pirate, this Blackbeard is no longer a pirate. The text tells us that in acting in territorial waters he is not within the specific geographies of the pirate, which would bring him under the jurisdiction of the Admiralty. He is therefore no longer a pirate, and is instead a criminal. As a criminal he loses the complexity that characterises the pirate. However, despite this distinction he is still prosecuted as a pirate. This suggests that piracy is an identity, not an occupation.

3.7.3 Captain-crew relations echo contemporary cultures of violence

Violence perpetrated by the captain upon his crew further affirms the affinities between the non-pirate and the pirate captain in the General History. Historians of the eighteenth-century maritime sphere differ in their assessment of violence aboard early eighteenth-century ships. Turley and Rediker suggest that shipboard violence perpetrated either by, or at the behest of, the captain was prevalent. Both argue that this violence was a form of discipline designed to maintain order and shore up the captain's power. According to Turley, Unparalell'd Cruelty; or the Tryal of Captain Jeane 'demonstrates the remarkable discipline a crew was forced to put up with'. He argues that both naval and merchant ships regularly employed these violent strategies to maintain order. Rediker concurs that 'discipline was brutal. Each ship was “a little kingdom” whose captain held a near-absolute power which he often abused'. He suggests that conditions aboard the naval ship 'were no less harsh. Food supplies often ran short, wages were low, mortality was high, discipline severe, and desertion consequently chronic'. In Turley and Rediker's analysis, naval, merchant, and privateer captains were often tyrants that used violence to maintain order.

Rodger contests these views. He argues that 'some modern writers have represented the Navy as a strictly ordered, hierarchical society, brutally repressing the slightest deviance'; however, 'in reality, when brutality occurred, it tended to destroy naval discipline'. Rodger

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196 Turley, p. 12.
198 Rediker, "Under the Banner of King Death": The Social World of Anglo-American Pirates, 1716 to 1726', p. 207.
199 Rodger, pp. 210–11.
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argues that eighteenth-century naval captains maintained command through ‘unstated consent, not force’ (p. 211). He contends that ‘a ship at sea under sail depended utterly on disciplined teamwork, and any seaman knew without thinking that sea orders had to be obeyed for the safety of all’ (p. 207). He suggests that, despite some accounts ‘that the majority of officers were monsters of cruelty’, the reality of life at sea meant that captains did not mete out discipline arbitrarily or excessively (p. 211). However, he does not dispute that violence occurred aboard naval ships. Rather, he argues that any violence was a product of contemporary culture ‘in which personal violence was more common than it is now’ (p. 212). In the eighteenth century ‘people were more accustomed to settle affairs with a blow than now seems proper, and the navy was no exception’ (p. 212). What would be considered assault to a modern reader was a reasonable way to resolve a dispute when the General History was published.

Turley, Rediker and Rodger present strikingly different pictures of captaincy. Rediker’s and Turley’s captains are tyrants who used violence to keep their companies in line, while Rodger argues that any commander who attempted to rule in such a way would have likely been replaced. I am more convinced by Rodger’s arguments that there was a spectrum of behaviour ‘between an officer like William Hervey, whose sadistic caprices strongly suggest that he was unbalanced, and one like Captain Samuel Faulknor, who made his men “do their duty like brisk lads” but absolutely forbade his officers to strike them’ (p. 212). He argues ‘in practice officers did vary greatly in the degree of violence which they employed’ (p. 212). Violence within limits was an expected part of shipboard life. When the General History was published the non-pirate captain was neither a tyrant nor an abuser.

Placing the often-cited violence of Blackbeard into the context described by Rodger allows us to understand Blackbeard’s violence as unorthodox acts of discipline. Blackbeard inflicts violence upon his crew in two key episodes. First he challenges his crew to ‘make a Hell of [their] own, and try how long [they] can bear it’. They go into the hold and:

- closing up all the Hatches, filled several Pots full of Brimstone, and other combustible Matter, and set it on Fire, and so continued till they were almost suffocated, when some of the Men cried out for Air; at length [Blackbeard] opened the Hatches, not a little pleased that he held out the longest. (p. 100)

Blackbeard endangers them all to prove his superiority. A similar effect is accomplished when he interrupts an evening of drinking by drawing and cocking two pistols, then ‘when the Pistols were ready, he blew out the Candle, and crossing his Hands, discharged them at his Company; Hands, the Master, was shot thro’ the Knee, and lam’d for Life; the other Pistol did no Execution’ (pp. 98 – 9). When questioned about his behaviour the captain remarks ‘if he

did not now and then kill one of them, they would forget who he was’ (p. 99). These moments of violence contrast with those conveyed in ‘Of Captain Low and his crew’ and ‘Of Captain Jaen and his crew’. They craft a specific persona designed to maintain his leadership. I suggest that these are moments of control and discipline, even though the text frames them as moments of recklessness and unpredictability. While these episodes are not preceded by any noticeable dissention or infraction, nevertheless these intimidation tactics are no more extreme than the disciplinary measures commonly used in the early eighteenth-century maritime world. They do not look out of place alongside what Chris Land lists as standard punishment on eighteenth-century ships: ‘whipping and ‘pickling’ – rubbing salt into the wounds – along with ‘seating’, keel-hauling, clamping in irons, bread and water rations and executions’.201

These interactions impact the modality of captaincy constructed by the Blackbeard chapters across editions. The inclusion of this method of control in the first octavo renders the mutineer captain a more complex figure who depends on echoing conventional methods of discipline to assert and maintain his leadership. However, when the text reconfigures Blackbeard’s captaincy it also reconstitutes these episodes. They become unorthodox methods of control enacted by a captain that mirrors conventional ideas of leadership and authority. Blackbeard’s actions appear even more conventional when placed alongside the exhaustive list of extreme violence perpetrated by Jaen in the 1734 compendium. Blackbeard’s treatment of his crew is unconventional, but hardly extreme. After the first octavo Blackbeard transforms into a character who becomes a captain like naval figures do, and who maintains his rule in a similar manner to a naval, merchant, or privateer captains.

**Conclusion**

The General History imagines captaincy as a spectrum of qualities and behaviours. Comparing editions shows how individuals move along this spectrum at various points in their narratives, and across the early life of this text. It constructs naval, merchant, and privateer captains as ‘not pirates’ and pirate hunters, thereby emphasising that pirate captaincy is not defined in opposition to the qualities displayed by their non-pirate counterparts. Rather, the spectrum of captaincy spans outlawed and non-outlawed characters.

Across editions the text offers us captains that exaggerate the qualities expressed in early modern depictions of the hero. The text imbues the pirates with the affective qualities of the hero, in ways that are not completely flattened by the tensions in the text. Furthermore, the

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Pirate captains and their non-pirate counterparts share these characteristics, suggesting that this is not a purely ironic account that imagines the pirate captain as a villain. Both the pirate captain and the non-pirate captain are characterised through a hyper valuing of courage and technical skill. These qualities are consistently displayed, and become objectives in and of themselves, rather than qualities that can be put towards good leadership.

The chapters present encounters between pirate captains and their victims that move between accounting and violence. Scenes in which predation is primarily described as accounting are consistent and frequent across editions. In contrast, predation as violence is amplified across the octavo editions, transitioning from strategy deployed by pirates to a defining characteristic of the pirate. These editions widen the parameters of this spectrum further: predation is variously accounting, accounting accompanied by violence, and extreme violence.

The text also offers a spectrum of behaviour from the captain as a self-interested venturer to the captain as a leader committed to egalitarianism. The text offers a literary exploration of egalitarianism, as it presents neither a sincere endorsement, nor a complete disavowal of egalitarian principles. Other narratives construct the captain as initiating an unorthodox commercial venture. Captains slide along this continuum as they predate and lead their companies.

Exploring the egalitarian commitments of selected captains opens up a further spectrum of behaviours. The text presents captains that move between radical structures of leadership, and structures and behaviours that mirror conventional ship hierarchies. This is particularly brought into relief when comparing the first and second octavos. Captains that echo the naval captains of the early eighteenth century replace selected radical captains in the second and subsequent octavos.

The spectrum of captaincy explored by the General History produces a rich imagining of the pirate as captain that spans legitimate and illegitimate, as well as venturesome and egalitarian behaviours.
Chapter 4  Conclusion

4.1 The current profile of the eighteenth-century pirate

The eighteenth-century pirate remains a popular figure in narrative fiction, with a reboot of *Pirates of the Caribbean* in development, and *Skull and Bones*, set to be released in 2021.1 *Black Sails* was the most watched premiere of a television programme on the *Starz* network in 2014, while *Uncharted 4* reportedly sold 8.7 million copies in 2016.2 Ubisoft had shipped more than 11 million copies of *Assassin’s Creed: Black Flag* (2013) worldwide by May 2014.3 Likewise, according to Microsoft, more than 15 million players have played *Sea of Thieves* since it launched in March 2018.4 As Grace Moore observes, ‘our appetite for pirate tales remains as hearty as ever’.5 These iterations of the eighteenth-century pirate owe much to their eighteenth-century literary predecessors.

Video games allow audiences additional opportunities to engage with eighteenth-century piracy. Children have long played pirates; new media allow this play in different ways. For example, the shared world adventure format of *Sea of Thieves* allows players to form fellowships online as they adventure and loot on the virtual high seas. In *Assassin’s Creed: Black Flag* players can mutiny, captain pirate ships, and build a company by saving pirates from colonial authorities. Eighteenth-century piracy has become an adventure one can embark upon from the comfort of one’s sofa. The opportunity to play at being pirates has been expanded by new technologies.

New forms of narrative fiction continue to reimagine the stories of the *General History*. *Uncharted 4* rewrites the Avery myth as players explore modern day Madagascar in search of his treasure. Libertalia is reimagined as a con founded by Avery and his fellow pirate

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1 *Skull and Bones* is an open world video game set in the eighteenth century that offers players the opportunity to become 'the ultimate pirate'.
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captains, which aimed to lure pirates in with the promise of a pirate utopia, only to steal their booty and enslave or kill them. Meanwhile, *Assassin’s Creed: Black Flag* inserts the playable character, Edward Kenway, into a world populated by the characters of the *General History*. The game expands some narratives and rewrites others, as it embeds Kenway and the *Assassin’s Creed* franchise’s central premise. For example, it retells the second octavo’s account of Blackbeard. These texts therefore offer new interpretations of both character and plot.

My introduction observes how narrative fictions, like *Black Sails*, draw upon the *General History* as a source of ideas and images. However, the work of my thesis suggests that we might reassess the relationship between these texts. I establish that the *General History* is a malleable and much-manipulated text. This open form suggests we could approach *Black Sails* as a kind of iteration of the *General History*. This is not to argue that *Black Sails* is a continuation of the *General History*’s narrative tradition, because the television programme also focuses on a longer adventure narrative that reaches towards *Treasure Island*. Rather, I suggest that there is some sense of the *General History* in this programme. *Black Sails* depicts a number of pirates from the *General History* who move in and out of the narrative; each with their own reimagined miniature biographies. Furthermore, I propose that we approach popular histories of piracy, such as Konstam’s works, and books like Gosse’s *The Pirate’s Who’s Who* as further evolutions of the *General History*. As my introduction establishes, these texts transpose the narratives and characters of the *General History* into historiography. The pirates of this text develop a new textual life, which is independent of the literary techniques and conditions that signal how unstable and malleable the *General History* is. My research not only offers an account of the early life of the *General History*. It also proposes a new mode of reading this text, as a narrative tradition that extends into the twenty-first century.

The literary pirates of the eighteenth century remain both alive and influential three hundred years after their historical counterparts roamed the oceans. The presence of these figures within the cultural imagination justifies the exploration of foundational texts. Their power within cultural industries today is better understood by analysing the texts that render the pirate a seductive character in the eighteenth-century. These figures continue to speak to ideas of legitimacy, authority, power, criminality, and violence. Perhaps the most influential of these pirates still live in the cultural imagination is Johnson’s Blackbeard.

4.2 Revising approaches to Blackbeard

This thesis begins with a description of the archetype of piracy offered by the *General History*, and ends with the character that has become a stereotype of piracy in the current cultural
imagination. Blackbeard is one of only two characters given a detailed physical description in the *General History*. Similarly, he is one of a small number to be illustrated across editions. Further, scholars often abstract his chapter or have focused on him over the other images of piracy offered by this text. However, the tendency to abstract singular pirates and individual chapters from select editions obscures the full literary significance of the *General History*.

My research aims to restore the pirates of the *General History* to their places within the narrative fiction. I engage with Blackbeard, but do not privilege him above the other images that jointly construct the pirate in this text. As chapters two and three explore, Blackbeard is an outlier, not a typical example of the pirates of the *General History*. Chapter two demonstrates how he is used to imagine masculine relations rooted in sexual violence, not fellowship, while chapter three reframes the violence he displays towards his crew as a more extreme image of the captain that draws upon, and points towards, the excesses of those who are not outlawed.

I redress popular approaches to this character in this conclusion by arguing that the *General History* imagines multiple Blackbeards. Frequently, scholars focus on the comparison of this character to ‘a Fury, from Hell’.6 For example, Richetti suggests that his appearance demonstrates ‘how deliberately and self-consciously the pirates can assume [...] demonic overtones’, while Karremann argues that the pirate figure is ‘demonised’.7 While I do not contest that Blackbeard’s performance of masculinity constructs a ‘demonic’ character in certain editions, I argue that the representation of this character is far from stable between 1724 and 1734. The changing image of Blackbeard exemplifies how specific editions can alter our interpretations, and demonstrates the value of reading across editions. I identify four versions of Teach: the ‘Fury’ that nonetheless resembles a naval officer in the octavos; the more conventional figure found in the abridgements; the sailor rooted in the maritime world; and the pirate turned gang leader.

7 Richetti, p. 77; Karreman, p. 76.
Conclusion

The first octavo presents a dramatic and imposing figure:

Figure 1: Illustration of Blackbeard in first octavo edition (© British Library Board, Shelfmark C.121.b.24 (p. 86))

A detailed description accompanies this illustration:

This Beard was black, which he suffered to grow of an extravagant Length; as to Breadth, it came up to his Eyes; he was accustomed to twist it with Ribbons, in small Tails, after the manner of our Ramellies Wigs, and turn them about his Ears; In Time of Action, he wore a Sling over his Shoulders, with three brace of Pistols, hanging in Holsters like Bandaliers; he wore a Fur-Cap, and stuck a lighted Match on each Side, under it, which appearing on each side his Face, his Eyes naturally looking Fierce and Wild, made him altogether such a Figure, that Imagination cannot form an Idea of a Fury, from Hell, to look more frightful.¹⁸

Both depictions focus on the pirate's beard. The dark ink draws attention to the attribute that gives Blackbeard his nickname and adds menace to the visual depiction. The written description, meanwhile, compares its style to a campaign wig worn by officers of the early eighteenth-century. Karremann argues that, through the allusion to military figures, 'a sign of normative masculinity and of military success is here transformed into a sign of transgressive

masculinity and illegal warfare against one's own country and economy.' However, I argue that the image also associates Blackbeard with North African corsairs. His fur cap and dark beard resemble sixteenth-century depictions of Admiral Khair Ad-din Barbarossa. This image therefore imposes a perceptible distance between the pirate and the naval men who oppose him. His rotund figure implies excessive consumption and success – a pirate can only overindulge in victuals if his predation is successful.

Changes made in the illustration of the second and subsequent octavos suggest alternative readings of this character. The second octavo presents a conventional figure that echoes contemporary portraits of naval officers. This change is not immediately evident in Blackbeard’s description: the phrase ‘He wore a Fur-Cap, and stuck a lighted Match on each Side, under it,’ is replaced by ‘and stuck lighted Matches under his Hat’. However, the re-incised illustration amplifies this variation, transforming the pirate captain into a more respectable figure as the visual style of a naval officer replaces the wild and bulky character conveyed in the first octavo:

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9 Karreman, p. 76.
This Blackbeard is depicted like a naval officer, in full length and in front of a maritime scene. The printer reduces the menace evoked by fading the tone of his bread. His coat no longer strains against his stomach, his guns are tidily organised in two symmetrical columns, and he carries an ammunition box. Furthermore, a tri-corn hat, which was part of the naval officer’s attire, replaces the fur cap. Before 1748 commissioned officers aboard a navy ship did not wear a specific uniform. However, contemporary portraiture makes a clear distinction between common sailors and leaders. As Rodger argues, sailors were easy to distinguish in the eighteenth century by their ‘short clothes’, which ‘were “short” because they stopped at or below the waist, leaving no loose skirts to endanger a man working aloft’ (p. 64). They also wore ‘Trowsers’ ‘a sort of loose breeches of canvas’ instead of breeches (p. 64). In contrast, naval officers are often depicted in a frock coat and breeches. Overall, this Blackbeard’s amended appearance echoes conventional imagery.

The abridgements, meanwhile, amplify this resemblance between Blackbeard and naval officers. They exclude the description of his appearance, and thus exclude any comparison of

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13 Rodger, p. 65.
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him to ‘a Fury, from Hell’.\textsuperscript{14} The 1725 abridgement instead calls him an ‘accomplished villain’, while the 1729 abridgement even omits this phrase.\textsuperscript{15} They focus instead on his achievements and acquisitions and also exclude many details of his behaviour, such as the violence against his crew. The abridgements render this re-imagined Teach as one of many illustrated characters:

Figure 3 Selected illustrations in 1729 abridgement (© British Library Board, Shelfmark RB.23.a.9569 (pp. 22, 62, 36))

Blackbeard’s woodcut strongly resembles the engraving included in the second octavo. Moreover, the captains depicted across this collection of images resemble naval officers. Each image therefore reinforces the impression conveyed in the second octavo. In the absence of any description, a conventional Blackbeard emerges from the abridged editions. In contrast, \textit{Brice’s Weekly Journal} removes both the descriptions of Blackbeard in its un-illustrated serialisation. This leaves the appearance of this character entirely to the reader’s imagination. Consequently, Blackbeard is one of a collection of captains in both the abridgements and Brice’s serialisation.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{The History and Lives 1st Edition}, p. 36.
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In contrast, Blackbeard looks like a normal sailor when he is placed alongside images of other transgressors. The compendium’s iteration does not express similitude to conventional images of captaincy:

![Illustration of Blackbeard in 1734 compendium](https://example.com/image.png)

**Figure 4** Illustration of Blackbeard in 1734 compendium (© British Library Board, Shelfmark C. 59.h.1 (p. 202))

Instead, the compendium’s Blackbeard is dressed in the extremely distinctive clothes of a sailor, with a short coat and ‘trowsers’ replacing a long coat and breeches. His beard is exaggerated, as seven long, matted tails replace the well-groomed beard of the earlier illustrations. His weaponry hangs from his coat and his hat is not a tri-corn. This image simultaneously grounds Blackbeard’s depiction in the reality of contemporary maritime life, and distances him from established images of captaincy. This Blackbeard is associated with the common sailor, while the octavo and abridged versions are visually associated with the captain. The visual connection between the pirate captain and conventional captain disappears in the compendium, which is replicated in other editions through the eighteenth century.

In sum, the visual imagery of the *General History* imagines four Blackbeards that serve different purposes. Two of these resemble conventional captains in various ways, while the
first octavo and the compendium emphasise a resemblance to other transgressive figures, and common sailors, respectively. This exploration of visual imagery emphasises how different iterations offer alternative images, thereby demonstrating the value of reading across editions.

Throughout this thesis, I emphasise that alterations impact how we read the whole. The octavo and abridged editions offer the clearest example of this. The abridgements produce a different imagining of the pirate by omitting details and parts that produce the pirate as a fellow. Alterations impact readings; therefore we gain a greater understanding of this much manipulated text by reading across editions.

## 4.3 The significance of this project

This thesis provides us with a greater understanding of an influential but misused text. Crucially, I add to our understanding of the early life of the *General History*, filling the need for a rich and robust understanding of the early life of this text. To do this, my work pulls together a number of disparate sources, alongside extensive primary research, to produce a comprehensive account of the first ten years of a *General History'*s publishing history. In doing so, I have shown how bringing together the techniques of book history and close reading is particularly beneficial for the field of piracy studies and for future study of popular texts like the *General History*. My work therefore expands the methodological possibilities of piracy studies.

I use book history methods to situate the text within a specific literary marketplace. I particularly emphasise how the text was proliferated beyond the octavos that are most frequently identified in studies of the *General History*. I bring attention to periodical serialisations as a particularly neglected iteration, and also demonstrate that booksellers saw the value of these pirate tales for selling periodicals. Additionally, I suggest that we could see the early life of this text as a microcosm of the contemporary book market. Looking to the eighteenth century, we see books published in a number of different formats. This book is unusual because it was published in lots of different formats in a short period of time. The *General History*'s early life therefore offers a particular kind of engagement with the history of form.

My account of the early life of the *General History* challenges common assumptions made about the text. In establishing the publishing history across a number of forms, I outline the impact that unauthorised or pirated editions had upon the publication of octavos. I particularly address the fact that scholarship typically conflates the number of octavo editions with popularity. Chapter one complicates this common reading by observing that the
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octavos did not necessarily sell well – the most pertinent evidence of this is the leftover sheets from the third octavo. I suggest that we might instead see the proliferation of octavos as a response to piracy and abridgements, and not necessarily a sign of popularity in that particular form. Proliferation does not necessarily mean that the more expensive octavo editions were popular, but rather points to a wider popularity of the text when it was produced in more accessible forms. Indeed, the fact that the second volume is not reproduced in any form in this ten-year period suggests that we should be wary of assuming that the production of a second volume was, in and of itself, an indicator of popularity. By placing forms together, I support the argument that the General History was popular, but in a more nuanced way than is typical.

My research proposes a new way of approaching the General History – not as a static text, but as a changing and changeable narrative tradition that continues to evolve to this day. There is no single text of the General History, which suggests that future work needs to be alert to the differences between editions, and how they influence our interpretations. As a consequence, I offer a new way to approach popular histories that rely upon sections of the General History discussed in the introduction. Looking at the text as a whole, rather than in parts, makes you aware that these apparent historiographies read more like a continuation of this narrative tradition than a critical engagement with the history of piracy.

Most importantly, I demonstrate the extent to which the differences between editions can change meaning. In reading across and within editions I examine how the amendments and additions to the text impact our reading of the central figure. While I am not the first to argue that we should read the General History as a literary text rather than as an archive, my research is the first to read extensively across multiple editions and multiple chapters. Consequently, I provide greater insight into the ways that different forms and editions produce the image of the pirate, rather than the sometimes-simplified images that are drawn from a partial reading of a particular edition or abridgement. My research develops our understanding of the pirate as a literary construct that has influenced both cultural and historiographical depictions over the last three hundred years. In examining the differences between editions I focus on the pirate as a literary type, rather than a historical identity or occupation.

This thesis enriches our interpretations of the pirate as a literary figure, both in this and subsequent texts. I produce a new understanding of the pirate as generated by the General History by reading him/her as a double figure – the pirate as fellow and pirate as leader. To do this, I place the characters of the General History in conversation with wider debates about the hero and homosociality, and within an early modern literary tradition of homosocial outlaw figures. This allows me to argue that the dimensions of fellowship and captaincy differ
across editions of the text. Importantly, my reading asserts that the abridgements produce a substantially different account of the pirate that minimises the importance of fellowship, both in the narrative and to the pirate as a literary type.

I argue that the literary pirate contributes to the development of the literary criminal, ideas of which were developing in the early eighteenth century. The pirate shares much with the highwayman found in both cognate and contiguous narratives. However, I also demonstrate how the pirate is a distinct literary type. This particularly emerges in how selected captains are imaginings of commerce taken to its logical extreme. Therefore, the pirate and the highwayman are similar literary figures, but they are not variations of a single thing. The pirate contributes to notions of the criminal; however, s/he is also more than a sub-category of the fictional criminal.

This thesis underlines that approaching the General History as a changing narrative tradition influences how we read the pirate figure. I acknowledge that there is variation in the pirate figure generated by the General History that cannot be reconciled, thanks to the text’s complicated and open form. However, I do not seek to resolve all elements of this contradictory text. Instead, I argue that the contradictions and complications produced in the changing depiction of the pirate should be recognised as we produce further work on the General History. These contradictions and complications arise in part from the changing age this text was produced within. Understanding it as a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century text exposes some of the factors that lie behind these complications.

4.4 Future study of the General History

Several avenues for further research emerge from this thesis. Studies of translations and of audience could provide insight into both the early eighteenth-century literary market, and the early life of the General History. Thomson and Burrows suggest that examining specific translations is:

a fertile field for the study of cultural transfer, as an understanding of what can be imported directly into another culture, and what has to be adapted or cannot be assimilated and must be quite simply removed is extremely enlightening.16

A comparative analysis of the French, German, and Dutch translations, with an awareness of the changes between English editions, could add to knowledge about the kinds of texts that were moving back and forth along the Channel and into Europe. Additionally, these translations could partake in revisionist historiographies of globalism. Furthermore, as chapter one explores, a speculative reading of these editions suggest that they frame the

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pirates as English and the English as pirates. These translations might therefore offer new thinking concerning the constitution of the English in the European imagination.

As chapter one demonstrates, it is difficult to discern who read an early eighteenth-century text. A further project could look to the provenance of library copies, such as those held at the Bodleian, the Beinecke, and the Huntington Libraries, for insight into the readers of this text. Determining the audience could illuminate whether it was widely read, or, on the contrary, whether the existence of multiple editions indicates a copyholder’s desire to expand their market. Similarly, we could look to intact collections of books, and sales records for early eighteenth-century collectors to see if the General History features, whilst also recognising that books circulated beyond their owners, and could have had multiple readers.

Future work could look for marginalia across multiple copies held at the research libraries mentioned above, and other institutions, such as the National Maritime Museum, for further clues about contemporary readership. The copies of the General History held in the British Library feature little marginalia; however, one of the copies held at the National Maritime Museum indicates at least one buyer, and one reader. As chapter one demonstrates, this edition suggests that the literate children of wealthy individuals read the General History. Further research into this family, starting with the Bertie papers and records held at the Lincolnshire archives, could add detail to our understanding of one kind of early eighteenth-century reader. Determining who read this text is a difficult task. It is one that requires extensive examination of intact eighteenth-century collections, and speculative investigation of journals, letters, and diaries from the 1720s and 1730s. Nevertheless, this research would greatly enrich our understanding of the early life of this text. It would also augment our current knowledge about the readers of criminal narratives and prose fiction in the early eighteenth century.

4.5 The General History emerges from the seventeenth century and within the eighteenth century

The pirate generated by this much-manipulated narrative tradition develops from literary pre-histories and cultural notions of the hero and fellowship. As chapter three demonstrates, these eighteenth-century outlaws privilege and expand earlier models of the hero, while as chapter two shows, these pre-histories are most influential in the centring of masculine fellowships. As a consequence, this thesis demonstrates that placing the General History into the outlaw tradition allows a richer understanding of the literary outlaw. Focusing upon these attributes allows us to understand the pirate as an iteration of the literary adventurer.
The pirate-as-adventurer also exaggerates the characteristics valued in his antecedents. He takes courage to an extreme, and constitutes technical skill to be as essential as martial prowess was to earlier outlaws and heroes. In key moments, these affective qualities of the hero become ends in and of themselves rather than attributes of good leadership. In this sense the figure of the pirate becomes an extreme version of the adventurer hero. However, he exists within a world where notions of the hero are changing, and these affective qualities are less significant to understandings of the hero. As the next incarnation in a literary outlaw tradition, the pirate of the General History is therefore a new kind of adventurer, who shares his antecedents’ values.

Within the same narratives we can also see the signs of a changing commercial world. The text reframes the outlaw fellowships of its antecedents, as predatory acquisition through venture becomes a central preoccupation of the pirate outlaw. As chapter three establishes, the pirate captain is thus imagined as a venturer who engages with and, in some moments, exceeds contemporary changes in commerce in ways that his highwayman contemporaries do not.

The text’s engagement with venture through the figure of the pirate offers two particular possibilities. First, it clearly frames certain kinds of venturesome behaviour as piratical and criminal. It expresses what some scholars have argued is Defoe’s position on crime and trade. Habib Ajroud summarises a rich history of Defoe scholarship as he comments: ‘Defoe’s vision is one in which “getting Money is the Chief Business of the World,” “trade is almost universally founded upon Crime,” and necessity is the foundation of both trade and crime’.\footnote{Habib Ajroud, ‘The Economy of Adventure in Defoe’s Novels’, in Adventure: An Eighteenth-Century Idiom: Essays on the Daring and the Bold as a Pre-Modern Medium, ed. by Serge Soupel and others (New York: AMS Press, Inc, 2009), p. 282.}

Maximillian Novak similarly argues that Defoe ‘advocated giving a pardon to the pirates of Madagascar if they would pay an appropriate ransom, an attitude in keeping with his view that some forms of business, particularly stock-jobbing, was merely another form of piracy’.\footnote{Novak, p. 478.}

Further, Novak suggests that ‘Defoe never changed his mind. Some twenty years later, in his Compleat English Tradesman, he was still arguing that all business constituted a form of crime’.\footnote{Novak, p. 478.}

The General History offers the South Sea Bubble as evidence of the fine and disappearing line between legitimate trade and piracy. The narrator intervenes in the octavo editions to comment:

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And, I can’t say, but that if they had known what was doing in England, at the same Time, by the South-Sea Directors, and other Persons they would certainly have had this Reflection for their Consolation, viz. That whatever Murthers and Robberies they had committed, they were not the greatest Villians that [were then] living in the World.20

Meanwhile, the abridgements offer these sentiments through the voice of the pirates who ‘[swear], That whatever Robberies they had committed, they are not the only Rogues in the World; for that the South-Sea did more Mischief in one Year, than they were able to do in their whole Lives’.21 Although the South Sea Bubble was, in one sense, a fraudulent aberration, in another it was an extreme version of venture. As Helen Paul observes, the South Sea Company did trade. She comments ‘there were valid signs that the company would make something of the trade,’ and that ‘qualitative evidence of number of slaves shipped by the companies shows that the company did seem to be operating efficiently’.22 Moreover, as Dugaw comments ‘in the South Sea Bubble we recognise key aspects of the modern order’ that signals ‘the emerging capitalist investment economy’.23 The South Sea Bubble appears to be an aberration that is nevertheless suggestive of a developing norm, and a norm to come. The text compares the South Sea Directors to pirates to suggest that any venture without limits is somehow piratical.

Crucially, the General History also gives a less explicit, but more consistent suggestion that piracy anticipates what modern venturesome behaviour might become. My analysis of what is kept and what is changed across these narratives suggests that piracy inevitably emerges from hyper-valuing venture. In a practical sense, valuing venturesome behaviour results in a number of disenfranchised seamen who turn pirate, as the introduction to the text consistently expresses. However, the text also suggests that the extremes of venture find their most perfect form in the pirate. By presenting long lists that detail the ships, their captains, and what the pirates obtain, the General History turns predation into accounting. These pirates trade as well as stealing – some of these trades may be particularly one-sided, or precipitated by the threat of violence, but nevertheless, they actively participate in the customs of commerce. Furthermore, certain iterations of the pirate actively constitute piracy as venture. These accounts contribute to the presentation of predation as commercial activity, and the perception of pirates as commercial actors. Selected captains in the text

22 Paul, p. 6.
23 Dugaw, p. 43.
suggest that the pirate is an extreme form of the venturer, and that piracy is commerce taken to its extreme.

Paying attention to the spectrum of captaincy offered across and within editions of the General History undercuts a reading of the text as an entirely cynical representation of civil governance and commerce in three ways, as chapter three argues. First, the affective qualities of the hero, particularly courage, belie satiric readings. Secondly, self-interested venture is only one quality of the captain, and is one that is shared in varying degrees by pirate and non-pirate captains. Thirdly, one implication of the spectrum is that the heroic can easily become villainy and vice versa. Furthermore, as chapter two establishes, fellowships are not rendered an entirely cynical exercise in the text. There is sincerity conveyed, particularly within the octavo editions, that tempers the representation of moments of crisis prompted by self-interested venturesome behaviour.

This thesis thus answers a tradition of reading the General History as an entirely cynical satire without suggesting that the text offers an entirely romantic and revolutionary account. I offer a reading that accounts for the subtleties and tones of this complex text. Readings of the text as satire, like those offered by Frohock, address romantic accounts through close reading. However, these readings do not capture the sincerity of fellowship and ideas of commitment that I identify across the early life of this text, nor do they recognise how ideas of the hero are played with by this text. I recognise that there are tensions and incompatibilities expressed across editions. Hence, my work walks a middle path between cynical and romantic readings.

The General History is a product of long established ideas of adventure and outlawry that speaks to the concerns of the emerging eighteenth century. The tensions and incompatibilities within the text suggest that older notions of homosociality and heroism have a diminishing place in a modernising and commercial world. The General History depicts a shift in the protagonist of prose narrative, from the knightly adventurer into the commercial sphere. In including the pirate of the General History in literary histories of homosociality and the hero we get a fuller picture of both the narrative affect of this influential text, and of developments in narrative responding to and imagining a changing world. My method of looking comparatively across editions in this detailed way interrogates a shift in the protagonist, and proposes a method that could be brought to bear upon other literary productions of the age. This thesis also argues that the figure of the pirate needs to be embedded in accounts of literature and change in the long eighteenth century, starting with this most influential incarnation, A General History of the Pyrates.
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