

Call for Papers

Buccaneers, Corsairs, Pirates and Privateers – Connecting the Early Modern Seas

(Susanne Gruss & Marcus Hartner)

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Until recently manifestations of piracy as well as of its state-sanctioned counterpart, privateering, were mostly discussed as geographically isolated cultural phenomena. Depictions of armed robbery at sea in the early modern period have traditionally tended to focus on specific regions associated with seemingly distinct types of seafarers and their piratical practices of prize-taking. Scholars of literature, culture and history have treated spatially and temporally dispersed occurrences of piracy such as Elizabethan privateers attacking the Spanish treasure fleet, Muslim corsairs capturing English merchant ships in the Mediterranean, Caribbean buccaneers taking part in the English project of nation-building and local English pirates roaming the coastlines of the British Isles as distinct and discrete naval phenomena. This trend to slot piracy into different conceptual categories is echoed by the associated designations – pirates, corsairs, privateers, buccaneers – each carrying its own set of geographical and historical associations. However, researchers have recently begun to question such compartmentalization. Over the last ten years, increasing attention has been devoted to the various affinities and intersections between different forms of (trans)atlantic and mediterranean piracy and their cultural imaginations.

Inspired by this development we suggest a comprehensive approach in literary and cultural studies as well as in history, which looks at the connection between pirates and other seafarers who navigate the North Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic in the early modern period and the cultural products they inspire. Such an approach not only includes a transatlantic perspective, it also allows us to revisit the literary negotiation of piracy by focusing on different aspects like the appearance of piratical protagonists in diverse geographical locations, changing negotiations of pirate identity, and the fluid boundary between illegal piracy and state-sanctioned privateering. With this symposium, we want to establish a dialogue between scholars working on diverse topics connected with literary, cultural and historical representations of piracy and seafaring. In this way, we want to explore the cultural as well as the ideological impact and function of the pirate figure in early modern popular culture.

Papers could focus on (but are not limited to) topics such as:

- regional, national and transnational aspects of piracy
- representations of pirates across different genres
- piracy and gender: viragoes, damsels in distress, and (hyper)masculinity
- maritime law: legal aspects of piracy and privateering
- heroes and villains: the pirate as a criminal and rebel
- piracy, adventure, and popular entertainment
- the relationship between piracy and privateering
- Muslim corsairs in the English imagination
- Caribbean buccaneers and the formation of Empire
- piracy and early modern politics

If you are interested in contributing, please send a brief abstract (max. 300 words) for a 30-minute paper to the organizers by August 09, 2017:

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