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Two Cross-dressing Female Pirate Protagonists and Their Use by Thomas Heywood and Maturin Murray Ballou

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Marek Błaszak (University of Opole)
ORCID: 0000-0003-2359-1563

Abstract. The article analyzes two cross-dressing female protagonists who go to sea and assume the position of pirate captains. They are Bess Bridges in Thomas Heywood's dramatic work entitled *The Fair Maid of the West; or, a Girl Worth Gold*, and Fanny Campbell in *The Female Pirate Captain. A Tale of the Revolution* by Maturin Murray Ballou. The article shows distinct parallels between Bess and Queen Elizabeth Tudor, and demonstrates that Fanny's seafaring adventure was inspired by that of Bess. Both heroines are also examined with a view to their contribution to the shaping of national identity and destiny of their respective countries.

Key words: female pirate captains, cross-dressing, patriotism, national identity and destiny

Ships have traditionally been regarded as male spaces. In his cultural history of the sea, John Mack observes that if "women voyaged on ships at all, it was as passengers or very occasionally as companions of sailors" – in the latter case as wives, mistresses or daughters of officers, though generally speaking, before the era of modern cruise ships, "women's presence at sea was largely transgressive" (Mack 2013, 161). Such a conviction could be related, on the one hand, to the deep-rooted superstition among sailors that the presence of a woman on board any sailing craft must bring about some kind of a natural catastrophe, such as storm and shipwreck, and on the other to a direct threat to the safety of the male crew – and consequently to the ship itself – resulting from their most likely fights over sexual exploitation of such a woman during a long voyage. In this context, the rather rare cases of women who found their way to the service at sea by disguising themselves as men have long fired the imagination of readers and writers – the more so if the vessel they chose to sail in was a pirate ship. Frederick Burwick and Manushag N. Powell note that "the historical precedent for female pirates … is real but slight" and that "Historically speaking there were precious few women pirates" (Burwick

and Powell 2015, 119). Indeed, as regards the English speaking women pirates, there seem to have been only two such figures in the 16th century, one in the 17th, and about half a dozen in the whole 18th century; at the same time, only two of them are known to have dressed as men, and then only occasionally (for the piratical careers of cross-dressers Anne Bonny and Mary Read cf. Rogoziński 1997, 33 and 286). On the other hand, there were many other women only loosely connected with piracy, for instance as fences of goods robbed on the high seas.

The following article focuses on two fictional cross-dressing she-pirate protagonists who were created by the English playwright Thomas Heywood at the close of the 17th century and by the American popular fiction writer Maturin Murray Ballou in the middle of the 19th century respectively. Although the two authors were active in different periods of time and their works selected for analysis in this paper are set in different historical, political and cultural realities, their heroines show some striking similarities and in the first place demonstrate that the figure of cross-dressed she-pirate captain could be used for aims more ambitious than merely satisfying the readers' thirst for sensation.

The examination starts with Thomas Heywood's dramatic work entitled *The Fair Maid of the West; or, a Girl Worth Gold*, which is classified as a "romantic comedy in which we have the note of patriotism and a breath of the sea" (Sampson 1970, 260). Its first part – which is the subject of the present analysis – must have been composed shortly after 1597, the date of the English raid on the Azores, and before Queen Elizabeth's death in 1603. Part two of the play was composed much later in the Caroline Age, and both were published in 1631. The eponymous heroine named Bess Bridges is an attractive young woman still in her teens, who works as a tapster in the *Castle Tavern* in Plymouth. One of its patrons, Master (i.e. captain) Spencer, is in love with her and she reciprocates his feelings. He is about to set out on what came to be known in naval history as the Islands Voyage of 1597 or the Essex-Raleigh Expedition against Spain. Before that, however, he kills a man who insults his beloved. Bidding her a hasty farewell, Spencer asks Bess to take over his tavern in Foy (properly Fowey in Cornwall) and there to await his return.

In the second act of the play, the young woman dresses up as a page armed with a sword and tells her wine drawer that she has "a manly spirit" and is ready to "meet a man i' th' field", and to "do all that I have heard discours'd / Of Mary Ambree or Westminster Long Meg" (Heywood 1850 [1631], 29). The heroine's reference to those vaguely historical figures (cf. Levin et al. 2017, 46) is important because they were what the scholar Dianne Dugaw describes as Warrior Women, arguing that their literary archetype was the ballad of *Mary Ambree* – "a London 'hit-son' of about 1600" (Dugaw 1989, 1 and 32). It must be observed that both Ambree and Long Meg were cross-dressing English soldiers who fought against the Spaniards and the French respectively in the 16th century, and that the former's motive was to avenge her fallen lover. But quite apart from those two Warrior Women, Margaret Steyn demonstrates that in the period of the Renaissance Queen Elizabeth "promoted courtly plays, epic poems and masque balls about great women from history", such as the Celtic Queen Boudica, in order to justify the idea of female rule (Steyn 2019). As regards the motif of cross-dressing in literature of this period, particularly drama, some of the finest examples are Shakespeare's comedies (e.g. *Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Merchant of Venice, Twelfth Night, As You Like It*), where cross-dressing was meant to provide female characters with more potential for action in the patriarchal milieu.

To return to Bess Bridges in Heywood's play, what makes her masquerade as an armed page is her determination to teach a particularly truculent patron of her tavern a lesson, for he continually insults her and tries to dominate her. Posing as her own brother, she disarms and defeats him, and eventually humiliates him by revealing her identity. Meanwhile Bess's beloved is severely wounded in Faial, in the Azores, when he intervenes in a brawl between two captains who are his own countrymen, and the report of his supposed death soon reaches the young woman. In reality, Spencer's life is saved by a skilled surgeon. On realizing he has lost the chance of returning home with the English fleet, the hero joins a London merchant bound for Mamorah on the coast of Barbary (that is present-day Mehdya on the Atlantic coast of Morocco). In the play's third act, the heroine – convinced of her lover's death – asks his friend Captain Goodlack to purchase and equip a ship in which she intends to sail to the Azores in order to fetch Spencer's body to England. In act four, it appears that the bark of the English merchant – with Spencer on board – has been captured by a Spanish man-of-war before reaching Mamorah. In the meantime, Bess sails out on her "bold enterprise" in a ship which has been pitched all black and christened The Negro at her particular request (Heywood 1850 [1631], 55). The color and the name may be assumed to represent the state of mourning for her loss as well as the piratical nature of her intended cruise. She appoints Goodlack the ship's captain but reserves for herself "a prime command" and announces her plan to cross-dress depending on occasion: "For mine own wearing I have rich apparel, / For man or woman as occasion serves" (54). The heroine and her company soon score a series of naval victories and capture rich prizes of Spanish and Turkish vessels. They eventually put into Mamorah for want of water. In the last act of the play, Bess dons her female outfit and appears at the court of King Mullisheg of Fez who is hugely impressed by her beauty as well as by her wealth and power, given the fact that she commands such a gallant ship and company of men. The heroine uses her influence with the Muslim ruler to obtain release of English and European merchants who have forfeited their ships and goods for various offences in his kingdom. The play ends with a happy reunion and marriage of Bess and her beloved Spencer, whom she recognizes at last among the English sailors recaptured from the Spanish man-of-war and brought to Morocco.

Proceeding to the interpretation of Heywood's drama, it is striking to observe how consequently the author sought to render the protagonist Bess Bridges as an embodiment of Queen Elizabeth I. From the beginning of the play, all the characters who meet her, are spell-bound by her beauty, honesty, modesty, and amiability. Sea captains who are regular patrons of the *Castle Tavern* call her "the flower of Plymouth" and "a most attractive Adamant" (8); the latter being formerly associated with the hardest stone, that is diamond, was meant to emphasize the heroine's virginity. Among those who eulogize over her virtues after she moves to Foy, there is the Mayor himself who states that:

> She's without stain or blemish, well reputed;
> And, by her modesty and fair demeanour,
> Hath won the love of all. (41)

When Bess hears the news of her beloved's death, she firmly states "I vow never to marry other" (46) and is resolved "To be a pattern to all Maids hereafter / Of constancy in love" (49). It must be added that the heroine's chastity, fidelity, and pluck are tested and conclusively proven at least three times: first by the tavern swaggerer named Roughman,

then by Captain Goodlack who pronounces her to be deserving of her inheritance from the supposedly dead Master Spencer, and finally by King Mullisheg of Morocco who, upon learning that Bess's name is Elizabeth, at once associates her with "The virgin queen, so famous through the world" and is even ready to share his kingdom with her (67).

The key virtues of Heywood's heroine closely correspond to those of his actual queen. According to her biographer, when she succeeded to the throne at the age of twenty five, Queen Elizabeth I was a beautiful woman – tall and slim, of clear-cut features and with red-gold hair. She was also modest and religious (Grzybowski 1984, 28 and 36). Throughout her life, she had many admirers and suitors, but she never married. By her own admission, she had always loved only one man – her childhood friend Robert Dudley who was loyal to her when she was persecuted by her half-sister the Catholic Queen Mary I known as Bloody Mary. At the same time, however, Elizabeth claimed that nothing unseemly had ever passed between her and Dudley (67). The fact is that she came to be known as the Virgin Queen and that the contemporary poet Ben Jonson (1968 [1600]) identified her with Cynthia, the mythological goddess of chastity (in his song entitled "Queen and Huntress").

Perhaps it would be also justifiable to seek some parallels between the rise of Heywood's heroine from the status of a tanner's daughter and tapster to that in which she assumes "a prime command" of the ship and its crew (Heywood 1850 [1631], 54), and Elizabeth's elevation from the status of a daughter born out of wedlock and then prisoner of The Tower of London, to that of the adored and powerful queen. In both cases the rise was in a great measure possible owing to the virtues as well as self-reliance, practical sense and determination of both Heywood's heroine and his actual queen. Once she began her long and prosperous reign, Elizabeth I pursued the policy of making reasonable compromises in both the political and religious spheres of life. For instance, her chief secretary of state Sir William Cecil had earlier been Catholic and Queen Mary's ambassador, while four out of eighteen members of the new Privy Council who had earlier been Queen Mary's ministers, retained their positions due to their professional competence (Grzybowski 1984, 30-31). In a similar way, Bess Bridges in Heywood's drama appoints Roughman, the former rowdy who tried to dominate her, lieutenant on board her ship *The Negro* while Goodlack who subjected her to the cruel test of chastity and fidelity, is made its captain.

The most convincing parallels between the fictional heroine and the real queen can be found in the sphere of maritime enterprise. In the first act of the play, two captains refer to –

> The great success at Cales under the conduct
> Of such a Noble Generall, [which] hath put heart
> Into the English: they are all on fire
> To purchase from the Spaniard. If their Carracks
> Come deeply laden, we shall tug with them
> For golden spoil. (Heywood 1850 [1631], 7)

The general in question is the Earl of Essex, Queen Elizabeth's favorite, who successfully raided the Spanish port of Cádiz in 1596 during the Anglo-Spanish War which involved a great deal of English privateering and piracy. The two fictional captains

also talk about the current preparations going on in the port of Plymouth for another venture of this nature whose aim are "the Islands", that is the Spanish Azores. This sets the temporal setting of the action in the summer of 1597 when the English fleet led by Essex destroyed the town and fort of Faial but failed to capture the Spanish galleons carrying gold from America. It is in this expedition that Bess's beloved Master Spencer takes part, claiming he does it for the honor of his country while his friend Captain Goodlack puts it bluntly that his objective is pillage. In this way, Heywood's sailors typify Queen Elizabeth's famous sea dogs such as John Hawkins, Francis Drake, or Walter Raleigh who were her naval officers as well as privateers and pirates. As Burwick and Powell note, they were sailors "for whose reputations the lines delineating privateer, pirate, and patriot ultimately held very little meaning" (2015, 125). In act two of the play, mention is made of four sea captains who are described by a wine drawer in Bess Bridges' tavern in Foy as "little better than spirats", that is pirates, and her reaction to this news is:

> No matter; we will take no note of them:
> Here they may vent many brave commodities,
> By which some gain accrues. They're my good customers,
> And still return me profit. (Heywood 1850 [1631], 22)

Such an attitude calls to mind Queen Elizabeth who not only "looked tolerantly on freebooters who were enemies of Spain" (Bindoff 1955, 247), but was also a major shareholder in the commercial-piratical enterprises of her sea dogs (Grzybowski 1984, 90-92). In the play under examination, the heroine not only socializes with privateers and pirates, but also personally embarks on such a venture when she buys "a good tight vessel", has it manned by "a ging of lusty lads" and sails for the Spanish Azores under "a sable flag" (Heywood 1850 [1631], 49 and 54). The declared aim of this voyage is to bring home the body of her beloved from Faial, but on the way there Bess engages a Spanish caravel and exults over her victory:

> Oh, this last sea-fight
> Was gallantly perform'd. It did me good –
> To see the Spanish carvel vail her top
> Unto my maiden flag. (56-7)

That her motive is not only personal revenge or patriotic feeling becomes evident when she tells her shipmates that when they land in Faial, "Yours be the spoil" (57). The motif of maritime plunder recurs when Chorus relates at the end of act four how Bess and her company "make spoil / Of the rich Spaniard, and the barbarous Turk" (62).

The heroine's identification with Queen Elizabeth I becomes more complete when she fights and defeats a Spanish "gallant ship of war" under Saint George's Cross, that is the national flag of England. It is also worthwhile to observe that the prospect of a tough naval battle makes Captain Goodlack suggest that considering her safety, Bess should go below deck, to which she replies:

> Captain, you wrong me: I will face the fight;
> And where the bullets sing loud'st 'bout mine ears,

There shall you find me cheering up my men. (59)

Jacob Abbot, the biographer of Queen Elizabeth, states that one of her distinctive characteristics was courage. In the summer of 1588 when the Spanish Armada was approaching the shores of England and the danger of invasion became imminent, the Queen visited the Tilbury camp near the mouth of the River Thames and reviewed her troops in person: "She rode to and fro on horseback along the lines, armed like a warrior … and bore a general's truncheon … as a badge of command … animating the men to the highest enthusiasm by her courageous bearing, her look of confidence, and her smiles …. If Philip [King of Spain] should land, they would find their queen in the hottest of the conflict, fighting by their sides. 'I have,' said she, 'I know, only the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart of a king'" (Abbott 1901, 226-227).

Strong commitment to the cause of England and the welfare of her people is the quality of both Bess Bridges and Queen Elizabeth. Before going to sea, the former turns down the proposal of marriage made in the name of his son by the Mayor of Foy and produces the last will and testament in which she bequeaths all her money and possessions to young men who want to learn a trade, to people who have suffered loss on the high seas, to soldiers who have been maimed in battle, and the like. Reading this document, the Mayor who is appointed its faithful executor together with his Aldermen, pronounces Bess to be an exemplar of "charity and goodness" (Heywood 1850 [1631], 52). All this seems to echo Queen Elizabeth's dedication to her country – in the first place her refusal to marry any particular suitor, as "At her coronation, she was married, she said, to her people" (Abbott 1901, 166). She further stated that she should not be reprimanded for not producing offspring, as she considered all English people to be her children and relations. The fact is also that she came to be known as Good Queen Bess for her courageous and successful defense of her realm against foreign invasion, and for her restoration of peace in England which had only a short time ago been torn by religious conflicts and persecution. Justifying the use of this sobriquet, the historian Conyers Read adds that it was "the peculiar distinction of Elizabeth that she never lost sight of the average Englishman of her age" (Read 1926, 657), and that "Her government was brilliantly successful … because it was nicely attuned to the popular will" (660).

More parallels between Heywood's heroine and Queen Elizabeth I can be found in the last two acts of the play when the action shifts from the sea to the palace of King Mullisheg, ruler of Fez and Morocco, who wants to enhance treasury of his kingdom by means of traffic with Christian merchants on condition that they pay customs duties. Upon landing in Mamorah, Bess is "wearied with the habit of a man" and her feminine beauty strikes the king so much that he declares her to be "some bright angel, that is dropped from heaven, / Sent by our Prophet" (Heywood 1850 [1631], 63 and 65). As has been already noted, King Mullisheg is also impressed by the young woman's command of "such a brave vessel" and is quick to identify her name with "The mighty empress of the maiden isle" (64 and 67). He actually treats Bess as if she were of the royal status and invites her to sit with him "in state" (68). It is no wonder that European merchants who have fallen into disfavor with the king, ask the heroine to intercede with him on their behalf, as they are convinced she "Can all things with the King" (69). Indeed, on the day appointed for state business, seated next to the king "like a queen" (70), Bess's request that the merchants' ships and cargoes be restored to them is granted without reservation. She even obtains pardon for a Christian preacher sentenced to death for trying to convert

the Moors to his faith. In the conclusion of the play, the heroine is "crown'd a bride" (75) and she and her men get a taste of the king's bounty, which – at least in the literal sense – accounts for the play's subtitle.

Bess's voyage to Mamorah and her dealings with King Mullisheg actually represent the policy of Queen Elizabeth who, from the beginning of her reign, "saw an opportunity to enrich the kingdom and antagonize Catholic Europe by reaching out to not only Barbary states but also the Ottomans and the Safavid empire in modern-day Iran" (Brotton 2017). In 1585 the queen supported the foundation of the Barbary Company and at the time of the Essex raid on Cádiz, "the English traded diplomatic missions with the Moroccan court and allied themselves with the Moroccan kings" (Vitkus 2003, 128-9). Those measures were meant to establish mutually advantageous mercantile links with the Islamic world as well as to defend the principle of free trade which was obstructed by Spain. In this sense, Heywood's heroine who successfully contends with England's maritime rivals and enemies, and who is so amicably received and so lavishly entertained by the King of Morocco, can be regarded as an embodiment of both Queen Elizabeth as a powerful ruler and an astute political tactician.

There is one more distinct parallel between Bess Bridges and Queen Elizabeth, and that is their contribution to what can be described as the construction of national identity. Elizabeth I made her subjects conscious of their status as free people whose welfare was bound up with sea trade and whose Church adopted fundamental ideas of the Protestant Reformation. They also became aware of their potential to take over the position of a leading power in the western hemisphere. According to Sue Jones, in the first part of his play, "Heywood depicts England in the process of constructing an identity as a mercantile economy reliant on maritime plunder to further ambitions of overseas expansion" (Jones 2016, 86). This is very true, and what needs to be emphasized is the role of Heywood's heroine Bess Bridges in this construction. While she is still an innkeeper in Foy, she transforms – dressed as a male warrior – the cowardly coxcomb Roughman into a valiant and loyal officer who joins the crew of *The Negro*. By his own admission, "She hath waken'd me, / And kindled that dead fire of courage in me, / Which all this while hath slept" (Heywood 1850 [1631], 39). At the end of the play, King Mullisheg undergoes a similar transformation and the catalyst for this change or improvement is again Bess Bridges and her virtues – in the first place her valor, fidelity and chastity. In the king's words addressed to the heroine: "You have waken'd in me an heroic spirit: / Lust shall not conquer virtue" (73-4). As a cross-dressed commander of The Negro which is bound for the island of Faial, Bess captures two Spanish fishermen and not only lets them go free, but even gives them some money, requesting them only to "speak well o' th' English" (58). What is more, she shows clemency to them, even though they tell her that the grave of her beloved Spencer was removed from the Catholic church in Faial – after the English force had left the town – to the surrounding fields, after which his body was dug up and burnt only because the Spaniards regarded the dead English Protestant as a heretic. Of course, in this case it does not matter at all that the body in question was not that of Bess's beloved, but of another Englishman bearing the same name. Cruising in the Atlantic, the heroine and her company also capture a big Spanish man-of-war and while they appropriate the vessel and her cargo, they again let the Spanish sailors leave in a boat for the shore. This time Bess asks them to pray for English Bess, to which one of them replies:

I know not whom you mean; but be ‘t your queen,
Famous Elizabeth, I shall report
She and her subjects both are merciful. (61)

By contrast, the Spaniards who happen to capture – “by odds of Ships, / Provision, men, and powder” – the English bark with Master Spencer on board, try to intimidate the unarmed English sailors, which provokes Spencer into calling them “degenerate” and lacking “nobless”. The Spaniards who threaten him with torture and death cannot but admire his mettle:

These Englishmen,
Nothing can daunt them. Even in misery,
They’ll not regard their masters. (51)

These lines, incidentally, call up associations with the two-line refrain – “Rule Britannia, rule the waves: / Britons never will be slaves” – of the famous patriotic song composed by James Thomson in 1740 (Thomson 1854) shortly after the Spanish coast guard attacked a British merchant ship and thereby started a war which lasted almost a decade. The song itself became an unofficial hymn of the kingdom and could be regarded as defining one of the crucial ideas about national identity of the British people in general, and not only of English sailors.

It must be noted that even though they contributed to the construction of national identity, neither Queen Elizabeth nor Bess Bridges initiated anything like the female liberation movement. According to Margaret Steyn, the long and successful reign of the actual queen as well as representations of several mythical and biblical warrior women in contemporary literature (and other arts) were considered “rather … as anomalies and exceptional” (Steyn 2019).

The second work analyzed in this paper was published about a hundred and fifty years after the composition of part one of Heywood’s drama, and its author is Maturin Murray Ballou, the Boston-based American writer and publisher who also used the pen name Lieutenant Murray. He wrote around twenty adventure stories, half of which are set on the high seas. Lyle Wright quotes Ralph Admari as hailing Ballou “the father of the dime novel”, though Admari also points to “the influence that Maturin Murray Ballou wielded in developing a strong sense of nationalism in American literature” (Wright 1939, 313). His work that is the subject of examination here is entitled *Fanny Campbell, or The Female Pirate Captain. A Tale of the Revolution*, and it was published in 1844. It sold 80,000 copies within the first few weeks and a number of reprints appeared in the next few decades. The work comprises ten chapters and is about 120 pages long. Literary scholars classify it as “a highly popular novella” (Burwick and Powell 2015, 126) or an “immensely popular novelette” (Ganser 2020, 139), while the author himself describes it in the Preface as a “romantic tale” set in “the stirring times of the Revolution … which have since received the sanction of history” (Ballou 1844, 3). This description qualifies the author’s work as a historical romance whose spatial setting is the Atlantic Ocean. In her examination of American sea narratives Robin Miskolcze notes that the literary American female mariner was not invented until the end of the 18th century, and that the first female crossed-dressed sailors began to appear in American fiction only in the

second decade of the 19th century (Miskolcze 2007, 132-133). In this way Ballou's romance can be counted among not more than the first half a dozen works of this kind.

As regards the plot-line of *Fanny Campbell, or The Female Pirate Captain*, the eponymous heroine follows in the footsteps of Heywood's Bess Bridges in as much as she goes to sea for the sake of her beloved man whose name is William Lovell. Her motive is romantic, for she wants to liberate him from the Spanish fort in Havana, on the island of Cuba, where he awaits trial for piracy, though he is actually a runaway from a pirate ship which captured the merchant vessel in which he was sailing from Boston to Port-au-Plat (nowadays Puerto Plata in the Dominican Republic). Like Bess, Fanny dresses in the clothes of the other sex and enlists as second mate on the brig *Constance* which soon sets out from the port of Boston for the West Indies and then London. It is worth noting that the ship's name is just as telling as Bess's, and in this instance can be regarded as symbolic of Fanny's faithfulness to her lover as well as of her loyalty to the cause of the American colonies. The heroine makes her appearance on board "dressed in blue sailor's pants, and a short Pea Jacket", and carries "a brace of pistols" and a knife with a silver haft "bent like the Turkish hanger" (Ballou 1844, 26). She is now referred to as Mr. Channing, and her ship is a well-armed privateer sailing under the flag of England. Fanny soon overhears a conversation between the ship's captain and his first officer, who are both English, and who treacherously conspire to press the American crew of the *Constance* into the British Royal Navy at the time when the thirteen American colonies began fighting their revolutionary war of independence in the spring of 1775. The names of the brig's captain – Brownless (brainless) and of its officer – Banning (despot) can be related to their state of intoxication and complete lack of professional competence. Given such circumstances, the heroine leads a mutiny and assumes command of the ship, which meets with a unanimous approval of the American sailors. An interesting detail is that among the crew there is an honest Irishman – Terrence Mooney – who is American "at heart" (31) and of whom the reader learns that "Terrence loved the English about as well as his satanic majesty affects holy water" (57). It can be regarded as only natural that as a representative of the nation subjugated to the British Empire he sides with the colonists. The mutineers then set course for Havana, where they succeed in liberating Lovell and one more American sailor from the Spanish prison.

Like Bess's lover in Heywood's drama, William Lovell does not recognize in Captain Channing his beloved Fanny, which may be justified by a lapse of almost three years between their separation and the present events. The heroine appoints him first mate on board the brig *Constance* and soon puts his fidelity both as her long-missing lover and as an American patriot to a demanding test. Only after he passes it, does she reveal her identity to him, though to the ship's company she remains Captain Channing. The test administered to William by Fanny calls to mind the one administered to Bess Bridges by Captain Goodlack in the play discussed above. Additionally, Fanny's test introduces William – who spent a few years in the Spanish prison – to the recent historical developments in the American Revolutionary War against Britain, such as the Battles of Lexington, Concord and Breed's Hill fought in the spring and summer of 1775, in which the Continentals undermined presumptuousness of the king's troops. In her account of those events, Fanny mentions by name General George Washington (together with his officers Israel Putnam and Charles Lee) who forced the British garrison to abandon Boston in the spring of the following year. Hearing the news about the progress of the

Revolutionary War, William Lovell declares he is "impatient to have a hand in the drama" (52).

The patriotic note becomes fully explicit when Fanny scores her first naval victory and defeats an armed English merchantman which bears the telling name George – the name of both the patron saint of England and of the contemporary King George III of Great Britain and Ireland. In a highly touching scene the crew of the *Constance* witness "the proud flag of St. George [being] lowered to the pine tree of the American Colonies" (39), that is to the official maritime ensign of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In the following chapters, Fanny Campbell still cross-dressed and acting as Captain Channing with William Lovell at her side as first mate of the brig, fight and capture an English ship carrying provisions and ammunition for the royal troops besieged in Boston. This precious cargo, together with two other prize vessels, considerably strengthen the Continental Army. In recognition of his services for the colonies, William obtains the letters of marque from the American Congress and renames the *Constance* in honor of his beloved the *Fanny*. The heroine herself, after only a brief spell as captive on board the royal cutter *Dolphin*, sets out with her beloved on a privateering cruise, during which they engage in "many a hard-won contest" and take "several valuable prizes" (104). They are now husband and wife, William taking up the post of captain and Fanny that of his companion and counsellor.

In the last two chapters of Ballou's work, the narrator eulogizes over the rise of the Americans to their present status of a free and independent nation that is "sure to prosper" (104). This vision is confirmed by material well-being of the Lovells who, six years after the War of Independence, buy a yacht and go on a pleasure cruise around the Mediterranean and the Irish Sea. Even at this peaceful stage, they have an opportunity to hear an inspiring story related by an old weather-beaten sailor in the Isle of Man, of John Paul Jones, a Scotsman by birth who "offered his services to the Continental Congress, whose cause he espoused" and who "gained some most brilliant naval victories" for the Americans (114). It might be interesting to add that some twenty years prior to Ballou's romance, James Fenimore Cooper made John Paul Jones the title protagonist of *The Pilot: A Tale of the Sea* (1872 [1824]) which is also set during the American Revolution.

In the analysis and interpretation of *Fanny Campbell, or The Female Pirate Captain*, one of the major issues that needs to be addressed is the heroine's transformation from a rebel and pirate into an indomitable fighter for American independence and then a rightful US privateer. Even before she goes to sea, Fanny appears to be an outspoken critic of "the conduct of the home government", and particularly "their right to tax and to make laws for the colonies" (13). This is an almost direct reference to the widespread and mounting opposition from the inhabitants of American colonies to the series of Revenue Acts which the British Parliament began to pass from 1764 onwards, and which the Americans saw as burdens and limitations imposed on their economy and liberties. The reasoning behind this opposition centered on the question of representation, or rather the lack of representation of the colonies' point of view in the House of Commons in London. In 1772 Samuel Adams of Boston and two other patriots drew up a statement of the colonists' rights, declaring that the Americans had "absolute rights to life, liberty, and property" (Norton et al. 1986, 121). Thus, when Ballou's heroine organizes the mutiny and takes control of the brig *Constance*, her first motive is to save her countrymen from what she considers to be unlawful imprisonment, that is treacherous impressment of the American seamen into the British Royal Navy: "most of them … would as willingly have

been immured in the walls of the prison" (Ballou 1844, 31). Proclaiming herself the ship's captain, Fanny is unanimously supported by the American seamen who thus escape the prospect of enslavement. She next hoists the flag of the North American Colonies, which soon meets with outright hostility of the English barque called the *George*: "This was scarcely done [i.e. the American flag hoisted] when the barque sent a shot towards the brig in defiance" (37). The developments described above show that the heroine's status as pirate captain may be true only from the British perspective, while the narrator makes it rather clear that both Fanny and her ship's company had a right to rebel against tyranny and injustice, adding that "Heaven was with the right and they were victorious" (39) and emphasizing "consciousness of the justice of their cause" (40). What the narrator clearly implies is that the actions of the American sailors and their captain are apparently sanctioned by God.

The arguments invoked by both the heroine and the narrator, which are meant to validate her conduct at sea, come close to John Locke's theory of natural law which strongly emphasized man's natural liberties: "Man being born … with a title to perfect freedom and uncontrolled enjoyment of all the rights and privileges of the law of nature … no one can be put out of this estate and subjected to the political power of another, without his own consent" (Locke 1963 [1690], 349). In the same treatise, Locke stated that the power of any ruler is the matter of a mutual trust which assumes the form of a contract binding his subjects as well as himself. The contract ends when the ruler betrays the trust of his people who then have a right to legitimately resist him, and this is because "the Laws of the State are only so far right, as they are founded on the Law of Nature" (293). The historian Henryk Katz observes that Locke's doctrine was well known in America, and that Boston lawyer James Otis was the first American to formulate the principle (in his pamphlet dated 1764) that all legal acts which are not in agreement with natural law, are invalid (Katz 1971, 125). The law of nature was referred to again by the First Continental Congress of twelve American colonies in 1774, by Thomas Paine at the beginning of 1776, and by Thomas Jefferson in the Unanimous Declaration of Independence signed by representatives of Thirteen United States in June 1776 (Katz, 1971, 139 and 146-148).

To return to the title protagonist in Ballou's romance, Fanny Campbell – like Bess Bridges in Heywood's play – appears to have been used as a model of the best characteristics of the Americans of actually both genders. According to Robin Miskolcze, female mariners in 19th-century American fiction were meant to propagate "the personal and civic qualities necessary for the nation to claim its exceptional nature", especially because their creators felt that the image of this nation was tainted "by men's selfishness, greed, or desire to move west" – obviously by land (133). In this sense the scholar sees the contemporary fictional female mariners as combining the virtues of both sexes – "the amalgam of the perfect American man and woman" (Miskolcze 2007, 166). Fanny Campbell fits into this category with her kindness, sensitivity and compassion on the one hand, and sober judgement, cool practicality and brave heart on the other. Moreover, it needs to be emphasized that Ballou's heroine – similarly as Bess Bridges in the relevant historical context – is also used for shaping destiny of post-Revolutionary America as a maritime power. Already in the first chapter of the discussed tale, the fishermen community in the heroine's hometown of Lynn in Massachusetts, is described as altogether made up of "dauntless spirits", including females of "a stern and manly disposition" (Ballou 1844, 8). Fanny herself, at the age of seventeen, is not one of the

"modern belles" who would faint at the sight of a lizard or snake, but a practical girl who can row a boat and "do almost any brave and useful act" (9). This hale and vigorous young woman is at the same time modest, religious and virtuous; she wears a "homespun dress" (11), prays for the weal of her beloved before going to bed, and when he sees her sleeping before going to sea, she appears to be a "beautiful picture of innocence and purity" (14). Such details of the heroine's character and appearance may well have been meant to distinguish her from the stiff-mannered and offish colonial ladies who remained loyal to the British crown. As Katz notes, one of the social consequences of the American Revolution was "the collapse of the spirit of caste, aristocratic snobbery and manners which clashed with tendencies for life in the atmosphere of liberty" (Katz 1971, 156; translated by Marek Błaszak).

About three years later in the narrative, when Fanny goes to sea cross-dressed as Mr. Channing, she proves competent in her capacity as second mate on board the brig, because in the meantime she has gained a considerable nautical experience from sailing with her father in his fishing schooner. She has also learned navigation from the Reverend Livingston of Boston who was earlier a sailor, and from "every nautical work I could procure, from love alone of the sea" (Ballou 1844, 55). Consequently, when she acts as Captain Channing, she appears to be "a man at heart" and her remarkable feats at sea "would have done credit to a naval captain" (54 and 65). But the heroine earns respect of the ship's company not only for her professionalism and true grit, but also for her kindness and generosity. The *Constance* under her command, now carrying the American flag, scores a series of victories in naval encounters with armed British vessels. Like Bess Bridges before her, Fanny shows personal courage and refuses to skulk below deck during the fighting, while as a winner, she displays nobleness of the American sailor, just as Bess Bridges did in behalf of the English sailor in Heywood's play. Thus, having captured the *George* of Bristol, Fanny tells its English captain and crew that as prisoners of war they need not fear for their lives, which proves their fears that the Americans will hang them all, are completely unjustified. Similarly as Bess, again, the heroine also succeeds in transforming one particularly rebellious English seaman into "an ardent supporter of the cause of the American people" (66). This happens after she appeals to his sense of justice and tells him about flagrant wrongs which the colonies have suffered at the hands of the evil advisers of King George III.

The fact that the heroine saves the life of the stubborn Englishman and that the narrator's commentary on this occasion is that "kindness and reason" should be "the only weapons that one responsible being should use with another" (68), as well as the above-mentioned blame which Fanny puts on the unspecified "ill advisers of the king" (67), seem to indicate that the author of the tale, while promoting patriotism and national pride in the American seaman, was not interested in straining the relations between the United States and Great Britain. Ballou's tale was written almost seventy years after the Declaration of Independence and three decades after the conclusion of the war between the two countries which was devastating for their economies. The author's attitude may have been motivated by an awareness that American and British sailors had common roots and that both countries were natural allies rather than enemies. The English writer of the sea, Captain Frederick Marryat, who was himself a naval officer and who saw service in the war against the United States between 1812 and 1815, wrote in his first novel entitled *Frank Mildmay or the Naval Officer*: "It is difficult always to know whether a man who has been much in both countries is a native of Boston in

Lincolnshire, or Boston in Massachusetts; and perhaps they don't always know themselves" (Marryat 1998 [1829], 259). In the epilogue to Ballou's story, the narrator mentions Captain Ralph Burnet, an American by birth who served in the British Royal Navy and who took Fanny Campbell prisoner for a short while, as an officer who asked the Admiralty to transfer him from his station in Boston harbor to the coast of England, because he did not want to fight against "a people whom he honestly considered to be in the right, and whom at heart he wished might prove successful in the cause that engaged them" (Ballou 1844, 119).

It seems proper to close the analysis of Fanny Campbell and William Lovell's story with the narrator's statement that throughout her eventful life, the heroine "imbibed … an ardent love for the sea" and that "This feeling was reflected in the breast of her husband, for William Lovell was in every sense of the word a sailor" (105). In the epilogue of Ballou's romance, readers are informed that even though the Lovells were eventually happily settled on land, their two sons "now serve their country as officers in the right arm of its defense, our gallant navy" (119). These words undoubtedly qualify the Americans as a strongly sea-oriented nation whose destiny and future prosperity was to depend on maritime trade and expansion.

In conclusion, although there is no external evidence that Maturin Ballou knew Thomas Heywood's play, the similarities between their two heroines are numerous and striking, even when it comes to details such as their supposedly divine descent. Towards the end of Ballou's story, a member of Fanny's crew is under the impression that his captain must be "a holy spirit" that "came straight from Hiven … to liberate the Americans" (103), which almost echoes King Mullisheg's feeling that Bess Bridges is "some bright angel, that is dropped from heaven" to inculcate the principles of virtue ethics and the spirit of heroism (Heywood 1850 [1631], 64). The idea of divinity brings to mind one more parallel between the two works, namely the conviction shared by both heroines about the superiority of their Protestant religion over Roman Catholic prejudices and superstitions. These are typified by the Spanish sailors in Heywood's play while in Ballou's work the heroine Fanny Campbell, who is of "the real puritanic stock" (Ballou 1844, 7), consoles the sailor Terrence Mooney, who is Irish and Catholic, on the loss of his mother telling him that he need not fear purgatory in an afterlife, because "If there be any purgatory … it is here on this earth where there is so much sin and consequent misery" (27). She soberly adds by way of criticizing Terrence's priest: "If he would preach more about the love and kindness of our heavenly father, and less of these imaginary places, he would serve the cause of his maker much more faithfully, and lead more sinners to repentance" (27). What Fanny means by "these imaginary places" is of course Purgatory, for which there is no place in Protestantism in general and Puritanism in particular (cf. Stone 1978). The similarities between the heroines created by Maturin Ballou and Thomas Heywood appear to be undeniable and can be found on different planes. Both Fanny Campbell and Bess Bridges as cross-dressing female pirate captains must be recognized as far more meaningful figures than just English and American literary incarnations of Warrior Women, or challengers to the traditional gender roles. The article demonstrates that even if they eventually assume their roles as wives and mothers, they must be viewed as paragons of both personal and national virtues that were meant to determine identity of their fellow countrymen and nations. They are also protagonists strongly advancing the contemporary political and economic interests of

their respective kingdom and states, as well as shaping their destinies as maritime superpowers.

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AUTHOR’S BIO: Marek Błaszak Ph.D. D. Litt. is employed as associate professor in the Institute of Literatures at the University of Opole, Poland. His current research interests focus on the Gothic Romance and Nautical Fiction. He is the author of 2 books, co-author and editor of 2 others, and author of 51 refereed articles which were published in Poland and abroad, including the UK and USA. His recent publications include: “Ann Radcliffe’s Gothic Romances and the Sea” (*Explorations*, vol. 9, 2021) and “Jane Austen’s *Sanditon*” (*The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Urban Literary Studies* (Palgrave Macmillan 2020).

E-MAIL: marbla@uni.opole.pl.