# THE WONDROUS OCEAN: TALES OF THE HEADLESS, DEAD, AND THE DEEP FROM 16TH AND 17TH CENTURY SEAFARERS

A Thesis

by

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Submitted to the Graduate and Professional School of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

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August 2021

Major Subject: Maritime Archaeology and Conservation

# ABSTRACT

The age of seafaring exploration was an era of discovery and fantastical beings. During the 16th and 17th centuries, many Europeans believed in luck, ghosts, foreign monsters, creatures of the deep, and devils. This folklore was an integral part of the mariner's life but is often overlooked or —starting in the 19th century—is muddied in popular culture. This thesis seeks to understand what the ancient mariners believed through microcosms of larger topics: luck, ships as beings, spirits and phantom ships, beasts encountered on land, monsters at sea, and magic. The main case studies are the myths of the Flying Dutchman, the Blemmyae, and the kraken.

To fully understand the mariners' lore, this thesis has sought out older accounts and scholarly analyses. Unfortunately, but predictably, an abundance of misinformation exists on this topic, so caution had to be taken as to which documents can be utilized. It should also be understood that this is folklore and is apt to change by its fluid nature. We must understand them as the sailors did. Popular seafaring lore has been greatly altered due to an artistic revolution in the 1800s, but much of it continues into our modern era. The kraken is now a feared colossal squid; witches are no longer hung, but the fundamental xenophobic ideas are still a reality. Folklore is more than just a vision of the past; it can also be a mirror of our present.

DEDICATION

To Dr. Robin Hadlock Seeley

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Kevin Crisman, and my committee members, Dr. Shelley Wachsmann and Dr. Troy Bickham, for their guidance and support throughout the course of this research.

Additionally, thanks to my friends, colleagues, and the department faculty and staff for enhancing my Texas A&M University experience. Thank you to Eliza Fisher for always supporting me and being a great person with whom to discuss the detail of lore. Finally, thanks to my family whose encouragement and support have helped me along my path.

# CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

## Contributors

This work was supervised by a thesis committee consisting of Professor Kevin Crisman [advisor] and Professor Shelley Wachsmann of the Department of Anthropology Department and Professor Troy Bickham of the Department of History Department.

All work for the thesis was completed independently by the student. Many chapters were completed as term papers and projects for various courses.

## Funding Sources

There are no outside funding contributions to acknowledge related to the research and compilation of this document.

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# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

The 16th and 17th centuries were an era of exploration for European countries as well as a time of imagined monsters, including a widespread belief in cannibals, krakens, and devils. Nothing seemed too impossible to find in new and bizarre lands or under the water. As a result, something as abnormal as a platypus could be as realistic as a giant. This was the age when ships and seafaring allowed folk beliefs to meld with the reality of undiscovered worlds.

Film franchises such as *Pirates of the Caribbean* present sailors of the past as religious or superstitious. How much truth can be found in these representations? What did different superstitions mean to them? To investigate these questions, it is important to analyze the extent to which the explorers and colonists of the 16th and 17th centuries accepted folk belief and how their beliefs impacted their world view (how they saw the world and thereby interacted with it).

This thesis will provide an overview of various folk beliefs of sailors by analyzing examples of broader subjects. Lore is a wide topic with an unfathomable number of resources, so only certain cases are to be explored here. To obtain an understanding of who these people were, it is important to examine some of the beliefs by which they lived: methods of achieving good luck, ghost ships, monsters they discovered when exploring, terrors of the deep, and magic.

# CHAPTER II

## A CAUL IN THE BAG IS WORTH TWO IN THE BUSH

*"Red sky at night, sailor's delight; red sky in the morning, sailors take warning."*[1]

If one were to analyze the idiosyncratic behavior that people perform every day to feed the fancy of their own beliefs the list would be overwhelming: knocking on wood, crossing fingers, not spilling salt, etc. This chapter will highlight some of the idiosyncrasies that specifically pertained to sailors. They had a society of their own, and many lists of their mannerisms have been recorded. These habits have partially integrated into the public's own knowledge. Out of the many oddities, there are a few that frequent several lists: no bananas on board, no women or red-heads, no whistling, red sky at night (sailor's delight), no ambiguous words ("drowned," "goodbye," and "good luck"), no sailing on Fridays, no facial grooming, animals have various meanings, carrying a caul, and no changing the name of the boat.[2]

Bananas have been cultivated since at least 5000 B.C.E. in Papua New Guinea and were brought to Europe around 327 B.C.E. by Alexander the Great.[3] In 1516, Spanish missionaries transported them to the Caribbean and attempted to grow them there around 1600. However, this was difficult due to winter frosts. Bananas were

[1] 2020 "10 Sailing and Boat Superstitions." In reference to the Gospel, Matthew 16:2b-3.
[2] 2011; 2020 "10 Sailing and Boat Superstitions"; 2020 "Top 20 Sailing Superstitions."
[3] Stone 2016.

introduced to North America in 1876 at the World's Fair in Philadelphia, and now the average American eats about ten pounds of bananas per year.

During the 18th century, a large percentage of missing trade ships from the Caribbean to Spain happened to be carrying bananas.[4] Several theories have been formulated for the connector of bananas and ship losses, some more plausible than others. First, since bananas would spoil quickly, ships would have to get to their destination faster, preventing any prolonged stops for supplies or fish. This rush could have caused many wrecks. Another theory is that since bananas ferment so quickly, especially when stored in an overly heated hold, they would produce toxic fumes. They could also be a carrier of deadly spiders that the inexperienced sailor had never encountered before.[5] Whatever the perceived roots of the banana curse, by the 1700s sailors believed that bananas were unlucky, causing a ship to be lost at sea.[6]

The roots of "no women on board a vessel" can be traced as far back as ancient Greece with *The Odyssey* by Homer.[7] Within the tale is an encounter with sirens, creatures (later depicted as feminine) that lure Odysseus towards the rocks. A similar perceived behavior pattern can be seen with mermaids. Both creatures further the concept of a femme fatale. Women were thought to be distractions for men who had not

[4] 2011.
[5] 2020 "10 Sailing and Boat Superstitions."
[6] 2020 "Top 20 Sailing Superstitions."
[7] Homer 1919, XII.153-191.

stepped foot on land for months at a time.[8] It was thought that, if men were distracted, the seas would become angry and subsequently enact revenge.[9]

Red-heads were also seen as bad luck aboard a vessel, possibly due to a presumed fiery personality. This concept may also trace back to the ancient Greeks, as they believed red-heads to be vampires. Another person (not red-head) considered unlucky was John Smith (the famed Englishman who explored and promoted the colonization of the Virginia colony in the early 17th century). Smith was "deemed a 'Jonah'" early in his life while on a voyage to Rome.[10] Ships never had "fair weather while he was on board."

Whistling and the "red sky in the morning" beliefs are both thought to be connected to storms. Whistling or singing into the wind supposedly "whistled up a storm."[11] This tradition and others derive likely from observed coincidences, especially since storms were common on the seas. Sailors may have experienced apophenia (the human ability to find patterns where there are none) frequently on the seas. However, these beliefs sometimes stemmed from meteorological observation, as in the case with "red sky in the morning." Red skies in the morning can signify incoming rains and rough winds and is a phenomenon that was noted as far back as biblical times.[12]

The next set of folk beliefs regard specific idiosyncrasies of luck. Sailors avoided words such as "drowned," "goodbye," and "good luck" in the manner employed by

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[8] Bassett 1971, 427.
[9] 2011.
[10] Bassett 1971, 428.
[11] 2011; 2020 "Sailing and Boat Superstitions"; 2020 "Top 20 Sailing Superstitions."
[12] 2020 "10 Sailing and Boat Superstitions." In reference to the Gospel, Matthew 16:2b-3.

thespians who prefer to say "break a leg."[13] Additionally, the mention of animals or buildings found on land could bring ill luck to the crew.[14] Saying these words or talking about them tempted fate.

Sailing on a Friday was generally unlucky because Jesus was considered to have been crucified on that day.[15] Additionally, the roots of fear for this day can be traced to the German name for the crucifixion day ("sad Friday"), Char-Freitag.[16] The name "Friday" originates from a powerful Norse goddess with a connection to the sea, Freya. Furthermore, the fact that Freya was female consecrated the day as unlucky. This belief has carried forward to the present day, as some shipmasters still do not allow sailing on Fridays.[17]

Moreover, how one decorated themselves was important.[18] Golden hoops and tattoos could bring good luck while self-grooming could bring bad luck. Trimming hair might signify a short trip, something that may trace back to the biblical story of Sampson and Delilah where the latter's strength comes from his hair.

Animals spotted whilst sailing could also sway a ship's luck. For example, a lurking shark could mean approaching death while a dolphin playing could signify good

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[13] 2011.
[14] 2020 "Top 20 Sailing Superstitions."
[15] Bassett 1971, 443.
[16] Bassett 1971, 446.
[17] Bassett 1971, 444.
[18] 2020 "Top 20 Sailing Superstitions."

luck.[19] Animals could also mean various things depending on the medium or context. If one saw a dolphin in their dreams, it "portends the loss of your lady-love."[20]

Two other animals of importance were birds and rats. One of the most famous seabirds in sailor lore was the albatross. In 1798, Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*:

> "At length did cross an albatross,
> Through the fog it came,
> As if it had been a Christian soul,
> We hailed it in G-d's[21] name.
>
> It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
> And round and round it flew.
> The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
> The helmsman steered us through!
>
> And a good south wind sprung up behind,
> The albatross did follow.
> And every day, for food or play,
> Came to the mariner's hollow!"[22]

This passage from Coleridge's poem describes both what the albatross represented as well as the good luck and safe passage it gave the sailors. In addition, the birds were considered the wandering souls of sailors; therefore, it was generally bad luck to kill an albatross. There is one account of a sailor killing a black albatross that gave him better fortune on the sea, but he argued that it was permitted since he caught the bird "with a piece of fat pork and let him die on deck."[23]

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[19] 2011.
[20] Bassett 1971, 451.
[21] This word is written as such due to the author's personal beliefs.
[22] Bassett 1971, 449.
[23] Bassett 1971, 449.

Rats were common aboard ships along with the insects and diseases they carried. Cockroaches were in the hardtack. Many animals boarded ships and traveled to new lands. Rats were so familiar to sailors that when these vermin fled a ship, or when none were on board, it meant that the ship would be lost at sea.[24] In reality, the rats may simply have been sick of the sea and constantly being wet, or maybe the leaks of an unsound ship drove them out.

The caul in a bag may be one of the oddest beliefs at sea. Relics of saints or other human body parts, along with "animal charms" (animal parts), were perceived as powerful, protective charms (although an intact corpse on board was generally considered bad luck).[25] One example of a "human relic" that has continued to be popular over centuries is the caul, the thin membrane which envelops the heads of some new-born children.[26] One who possessed the caul, it was said, possessed fortune, and the condition of the caul was considered to be the condition of the bearer. One example of a caul's power was recorded in 1797 in a work of verse by Claude de Malleville, who claimed it saved a sailor from drowning. Belief in the efficacy of cauls existed amongst sailors long before this, however.[27] In 1658, Englishman Sir John Offley left a caul in his will "as a valuable legacy." This belief carried into the 20th century with advertisements in newspapers for cauls. Even in 1954, a midwife paid a new mother the sum of £10 for her child's caul.[28]

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[24] Bassett 1971, 451.
[25] Bassett 1971, 456-58.
[26] Bassett 1971, 459.
[27] Bassett 1971, 460.
[28] Crawford-Mowday.

Cauls could be placed in a bag or sewn onto the clothes (such as on the trousers) to keep a sailor in good standing at sea. They could even be placed into glass rolling pins that would by proxy become a good luck charm of their own. Finding part of the caul on a newborn's face only occurs in 1 in about 1,000 births.[29] A baby being born with the entire caul is as rare as 1 in 80,000.[30] Folk beliefs arise from the uncontrollable and unexplainable, and being endowed with something so rare may have caused sailors to believe in a divine influence. Additionally, the symbolic element of the watery amniotic fluid that led up to the rare birth reinforced the idea that a caul was a charm against drowning.[31]

The ship itself was a vital source of stability for sailors and renaming it was considered an omen of bad luck because having a name gave the vessel identification and the crew power over it.[32] Seafarers worked in an element of many uncertainties, so losing another certainty was the last thing a sailor voyaging into the unknown needed. Christening and launching a ship was, and remains, an important tradition in blessing the ship and its crew, and some may have believed renaming a ship shattered that sacred consecration.[33]

Many societies had different methods of renaming ships. Naming ships was a tradition dating back at least to the Egyptian New Kingdom with the first ruler of the

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[29] Robertson 2019.
[30] Robertson 2019.
[31] Crawford-Mowday.
[32] Ronca 2015.
[33] "Ship Launching Ceremonies."

XVIII$^{th}$ Dynasty in 1567 B.C.E., Ahmose.[34] The Egyptians could title their boats in honor of their g-d-king, specifying the vessels as a pharaoh and an attribute or virtue (i.e. *Amenhotep II Who Made Strong the Two Lands*). Past renaming traditions have included decorating the ship with flowers, breaking bottles (like ceremonies of launching ships following construction), and human sacrifice.[35] Vikings offered up slaves to appease their sea deity before Christianity was introduced in northern Europe, and goats were gifted in their place afterwards. One recorded tradition even included a virgin urinating over the bow.

Late 16$^{th}$ century England has several renaming traditions. First, to graft a new identity onto a ship, the old identity had to be eradicated, including burning paperwork, removing the name if present on the hull, and asking a deity to forget the old title.[36] The ship then had to be blessed before a full goblet of wine was poured.[37] A member of the upper class aboard the vessel toasted the ship and crew before they took a gulp; then they marched to each of the cardinal points (north, south, east, and west) of the ship to sprinkle wine upon them. The ship's blessing was consecrated before, and right after, tossing the goblet, with the rest of the wine, overboard. This last dedication showed signs of true obedience to their deity.[38] One additional ritual that Sir Francis Drake

[34] Casson 1971, 348.
[35] "Ship Launching Ceremonies."
[36] Ronca 2015.
[37] "Ship Launching Ceremonies."
[38] Fletcher 1652, 71.

performed during his renaming of *Pelican* to *Golden Hinde* in 1577 was to honor Queen Elizabeth I: lowering the topsails so that they draped over the lower sails.[39]

Drake also used a similar ritual to name the islands he found in the Straits of Magellan.[40] He named two islands where his men harvested penguins Saint Georges, for the patron saint of England, and Bartholomew.[41] The latter was a reference to a massacre of French Huguenots, or Protestants, in Paris by Roman Catholics on August 24, 1572, the same day they anchored off the island.[42] A third island was named Elizabeth Island for their beloved queen.[43] Drake's island-naming ceremony included sprinkling wine in each of the cardinal directions.[44] However, since the goblet would not disappear if Drake dropped it on the beach, and he did not want to lose another one, Drake passed it off to his crew instead.[45] This was followed with a prayer led by their preacher, Francis Fletcher.[46]

While European leaders believed in the power of naming and dedicating new-found lands, the sailors held a much higher regard towards the ship identification than that of islands. It was especially important to ensure that this aforementioned ritual was carried out aboard vessels because, as we shall see in the following chapter, sailors believed that a ship was a being in its own right.

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[39] Kelsey 1998, 115.
[40] Kelsey 1998, 116.
[41] Kelsey 1998, 116; Fletcher 1652, 76.
[42] Tikkanen 2019.
[43] Kelsey 1998, 116.
[44] Ronca 2015.
[45] "Ship Launching Ceremonies."
[46] Kelsey 1998, 116.

# CHAPTER III

## SHIPS ARE PEOPLE TOO

*"Eyes are the window to the soul."*[47]

Eyes and figureheads enforced ideas of ships as spiritual, if not sentient, beings of their own, a belief that has existed for thousands of years. Some of the earliest evidence for facial features on ancient vessels can be discovered in the iconography of ancient Egypt in the shape of eyes. These eyes have various meanings, which can be traced via their use in societal and mythical connotations, such as Egypt's eye of Horus. ancient Egypt, however, was not the only society that utilized the eyes as a meaningful inclusion at the bow of the ship. The most notable was ancient Greece with its trireme warships and cargo vessels with apotropaic (misfortune-averting) eyes. These eyes eventually transitioned to entire faces and figureheads on later vessels, as even in Egyptian iconography, on historical-era European ships (starting with bow impressions for an *oculus* on the Iron-Age Britain's Hasholme Logboat), and American vessels. This chapter will highlight these developments in iconography to address how and why eyes, and later figureheads, were pertinent and evolved as they did towards the patterns still seen in modern times.

The saying, "eyes are the window to the soul," can be traced back to the Christian Bible (Matthew 6: 22-23), and the sailors of the early-modern era valued this

[47] Stover 2005.

concept.[48] People perceive their environment, and live their lives, through the lenses of their eyes; the brain is located behind them, and much of the human brain deals with sight. As a result, people associate their consciousness and soul with this region of their body. Portraying inanimate objects with eyes allows them to be personified and appear to have some semblance of consciousness. This is reflected in their portrayal in iconography and ships.

Eyes, as a concept, imply a bridge between the inner and outer reality of the individual, a "mirror of the soul."[49] Across cultures, eyes have had different meanings. For example, an open eye can mean intelligence while a closed one represents death and/or sleep. An eye can also exemplify the sun or a deity, and shutting an eye is meant to shut the windows of the soul from the threat of the evil eye. It is possible that the reasoning behind early eye depictions was due to humanity's self-discovery and the belief in ever-watching deities in the sky. Examples of this appear in ancient Egypt and Greece.[50]

Evidence of the apotropaic *oculus* reaches as far back as the 8th century B.C.E.[51] Such eyes have persisted into modern times. Horus's eye can be seen in the Eye of Providence, symbolizing an ever-watching deity found on dollar bills from the United States. This eye, a common theme in Egyptian iconography, was used to instill peace

[48] Stover 2005.
[49] Fingesten 1959, 19.
[50] Fingesten 1959, 19.
[51] Stephens-Borg 2019.

and ward off evil, specifically the evil eye.[52] As will be seen, the evil eye was believed to be prevalent in Egypt, Greece, and other regions.

Eyes that adorned Egyptian watercraft incorporated the eye of Horus, but this identification is based on depictions from tombs and texts. It is possible that these eyes were merely painted onto the boats, as no physical evidence of one has been recovered. Stones were sometimes used on statues to bring them to life by placing them into the eye sockets during the Early Dynastic Period (2920-2575 B.C.E.) and the Old Kingdom (2575-2134 B.C.E.).[53] Figureheads with eyes were depicted on warships, but no evidence beyond iconography has yet been recovered. It would not be until Classical Greece that archaeological examples of ship eyes endure to modern day.

In Greece, forms of figureheads and eyes paved the way for future prow designs. *Gorgoneions* (the head of a hissing Gorgon) were used as antefixes on houses and figureheads on ships to scare away evil spirits.[54] Other devices to ward off evil, dated from the 3rd century B.C.E. to the 3rd century C.E., included phalli, animal horns, and the mythical sea horses, *hippocampi*.[55] The eyes, or *ophthalmoi* (singular *ophthalmos*), were more common at the time than ship figureheads. These marble *oculi* (largely made of stone quarried at Paros and Mt. Penteli) have been recovered in the Athenian Agora, in Piraeus in the ancient Zea Harbor, off the coast of Israel, and off the coast of Tektaş Burnu, Turkey.[56] *Ophthalmoi* indicated an existence of the ship's "divine

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[52] Abdel-Razek 2019.
[53] Bunson 2002, 48.
[54] Aegean Maritime Museum.
[55] Nowak 2006, 156.
[56] Carlson 2009, 349-50.

consciousness," and this was highlighted by the use of red coloration in the iris and tear duct.[57] This was utilized to represent that the associated object had a supernatural consciousness.[58] The outwardly-facing *oculi* were believed to anthropomorphize the ship with a "spirit capable of seeing the sea."[59]

Eyes have separate implications on merchant vessels and warships. On a merchant ship, they were used for sight and protection against dangerous waters and nautical aggressors (i.e. pirates). They also could have been used as epiphanies, through which supernatural powers could materialize to help a journey.[60] Epiphanies were specifically targeted towards the supernatural while apotropaic symbols generally protected against evil, envy being a common malice (causing societal degradation and self-destruction).[61] The Greeks believed that the power of envy could be projected through the eyes and that disease, bad luck, and natural disasters could be caused by human envy.[62] This will become relevant in future ships, as Greek ideas and knowledge were passed on to Europe.

Northern European ships were also known to incorporate optics. The best known example is with the English Iron-Age Hasholme logboat from 300 B.C.E.[63] However, figureheads were to become the dominant form of symbolic sight for ships from this region.

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[57] Nowak 2006, 3.
[58] Nowak 2006, 141.
[59] Carlson 2009, 359.
[60] Nowak 2006, 116.
[61] Nowak 2006, 116-120.
[62] Nowak 2006, 127.
[63] McGrail 2009, 276.

The symbols of figureheads from the Post-Medieval Age of Exploration represented a ship's name, political ideas and beliefs of the country and sailors, and on the naval vessels the heroic and fighting spirit of the ship, crew, and service.[64] They were built to portray the ship as more than just a physical object and mode of transportation. Figureheads were also meant to instill awe and fear into their enemies.

Figureheads could either be aesthetically pleasing or frightening. One example of the latter is Hawaiian Marquesans (people native to Hawaii who settled from the Marquesas Islands in French Polynesia) in the 1800s who placed skulls of their enemies whom they had killed in battle on the bows of their ship.[65] The purpose of the figurehead was to embody the 'soul' of the ship and protect it.[66] Cargo vessels, such as ones from the Dutch East India Company (V.O.C.), included figureheads, but decorations became less popular during the 1800s with the rise of iron-built ships. Later watercraft with figureheads were only naval ships; personal or merchant vessels were no longer built with them.

Records of their names and figureheads on British warships date back to about three and a half centuries, and they include 200 known examples. Not all ships were given specific figureheads. Instead, some were given a 'scroll' (curling forward from the stem) or 'fiddlehead' (with a curl like a violin) that did not represent their name or importance.[67] The first English warships seen with figureheads appeared during the reign

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[64] Pulvertaft 2011, 9.
[65] Olsen 1984, 7.
[66] Pulvertaft 2011, 10.
[67] Pulvertaft 2011, 11.

of King Henry VIII in the mid-16th century, and they incorporated personification (i.e. *Mary* and *Matthew*) and zoomorphs (i.e. *Dragon* and *Salamander*).[68]

Ship names and descriptive motifs switched to reflect warlike references during Elizabeth I's rule, as displayed in the names *Victory, Triumph,* and *Revenge,* and to honor particular people.[69] A male name for a ship was not unheard of as, for example, *Argo* the mythical ship of Jason from Greek myth, but they were frequently designated as feminine.[70] *Golden Hinde*'s original name *Pelican* referred to the Queen herself.[71] Queen Elizabeth I adopted diverse Christian symbols to express her love for the English people as well as to reinforce her position as head of the English church, and the pelican was one of those symbols.[72]

The 'hinde,' or female deer, referenced by Drake's renaming was his friend and benefactor Sir Christopher Hatton. Hatton was a promoter of Drake's voyage and an esteemed colleague.[73] He was associated with the greatest Elizabethan sea captains and, thus, was by association a status symbol.[74] Hatton's cognizance, or heraldic badge (a badge of allegiance to a family or individual), was that of 'a hind statant Or,' that is, as a "golden hinde."[75] By making the name of the ship his friend's cognizance, Drake was attempting to secure relations and funding for future endeavors.

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[68] Pulvertaft 2011, 12.
[69] Pulvertaft 2011, 12.
[70] Casson 1971, 350-51.
[71] Kelsey 1998, 116.
[72] Kelsey 1998, 116.
[73] Brooks 1946, 182.
[74] Brooks 1946, 182.
[75] Brooks 1946, 191.

During the 18th century, most warships incorporated lions, some crowned (a symbol of pride, honor, and power).[76] Other lion-like figureheads were created to either stand on, or straddle, the stem with their legs carved down the trailboards to give them the appearance of kneeling.[77] By the 19th century, the lion figureheads were replaced by demi-heads, busts, and mythical figures such as Hercules or Hermes.[78] Towards the end of the 19th century, figureheads could no longer fit on the bows of the British Navy ships due to the narrow prow and introduction of metal hulls and ironclad ships, so, to sustain decoration traditions, bow designs were added, usually involving royal arms within a cartouche encompassed by carved scrolls down the flanks of the ship.[79]

English designs transitioned to America. In the 18th and 19th centuries, human effigies were popular, incorporating figures from myth.[80] Another reason for human figures at the bow was to honor family members or the shipowner.[81] Figureheads were in use until the end of the wooden shipbuilding era in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in America.[82] Their decline could be due to the extra cost involved, as ships with decorations were $2,000 more expensive, a considerable amount at that time.[83]

Unlike ship eyes of previous times, these figureheads were not apotropaic or meant to channel a religious entity. They were instead meant to bring a soul to the ship,

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[76] Brooks 1946, 191.
[77] Pulvertaft 2011, 12-13.
[78] Pulvertaft 2011, 15.
[79] Pulvertaft 2011, 11.
[80] Sessions 2005, 8.
[81] Olsen 1984, 19.
[82] Sessions 2005, 8.
[83] Olsen 1984, 19.

thus anthropomorphizing and zoomorphizing it. In that sense, they served as the ship's eyes to guide it through a safe passage. There are also ancient parallels of using the ship like an animal to scare away and attack the enemy, such as in a dragon figure (like the Greek Archaic period boar-shaped ram). The purpose of the eyes was generally to give the ship life and protect against the evils and hazards inherent in sailing. Figureheads, particularly those of later Europe, functioned in a similar manner.

The long history of eyes and figureheads demonstrates a lengthy "process of individuation and the belief in the inner powers of personality" in ships.[84] Figureheads referenced real people as well as supernatural ones and hegemonies (common thoughts or beliefs of a group of people) held by the crew. The role of figures usurped that of symbolic eyes and, thus, functioned in a similar manner.

The figurehead was not just a representation of the ship's name but could embody the very soul of vessel. For this reason, changing the name was rare. As a result, when Drake changed *Pelican* to *Golden Hinde*, some accounts did not reference the new name at all. He performed most tasks necessary to carry out the deed but did not completely eradicate the old identity since he did not burn the paperwork.[85] Some of the seafarers participating in the voyage may have seen this as bad luck and not approved of this new identity. As the soul of the vessel supposedly carried a crew to safety, this connection was regarded as vital.

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[84] Fingesten 1959, 21.
[85] Kelsey 1998, 116.

# CHAPTER IV

# FIFTEEN MEN ON A DEAD MAN'S CHEST: RECREATING THE MYTHICAL FLYING DUTCHMAN

*"I SWEAR UPON THE RELIC OF THE TRUE CROSS THAT IN SPITE OF WIND AND WEATHER, I WILL BEAT UNTIL THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT TO PASS THIS CAPE!"*

Thus did Captain Vanderdecken supposedly curse the vile tempest carrying away his words.[86] This oath, so the story goes, has been carried out ever since. The captain shall never rest. The ship shall always sail in a tempestuous storm.

Spirits and ghosts, the animated memories of those who came before, are littered through human folklore, especially in the folklore of the sea. The undiscovered country of death has not only enchanted sailors but also terrified them. Seafarers of earlier centuries understood the waters to be populated by ethereal beings, ghosts, specters, odd forms, shadowy lands, and imaginary countries.[87] A spirit, or the omen of a corpse, could cause a ship to be lost.[88] On the other hand, they could be the reason for a ship's salvation.

Ghostly interference continued into the modern era. A story is told of the Mexican ship *Chalchihuitlicue* which was caught in a powerful storm in 1852 and forced toward a rocky shore.[89] At the last minute, a man in a Mexican naval uniform appeared,

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[86] Bassett 1971, 346.
[87] Bassett 1971, 282.
[88] Brown 1973, 161.
[89] Brown 1973, 185-86.

and the ship, as if by magic (since the rudder was broken), turned away from the danger. The spectral man was identified as Captain Portfino San Luis Madero, the ship's first master who had died ten years prior.

As with magic, as will be seen later, seafarers believed in spirits that could either be angelic messengers or demonic tempters. Additionally, ghosts have been accepted as real by both learned and common sailors alike. Even Christopher Columbus's crew claimed to have a supernatural encounter in 1492.[90] Interestingly, this specter was a woman in white, a common archetype in many locations that have been declared haunted.

Corpses and skeletons could either relate to a bad omen or a haunting. Bones, especially those of a restless soul, were bad luck and a symbol, and reminder of, death.[91] Touching them could lead to the corpse's ghost coming after the disturber. Anonymous bones were encountered during Drake's passage through the Straits of Magellan on Saint Georges Island, but they were left as they were found in the hopes that bad spirits did not follow.[92]

Those who have died at sea were typically buried at sea unless they were someone of high rank. In the latter situation, bad luck supposedly stemmed from storing a corpse aboard a ship for months at a time and the smell that resulted. Additionally, there have been stories surrounding death at sea. Cotton Mather from the 17th century

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[90] Bassett 1971, 284.
[91] Sedgwick 2017.
[92] Fletcher 1652, 76.

Salem colony in Massachusetts described a spirit that visited a ship and carried off seven of the crew on a "ghostly canoe."[93] He also told of how "many persons, who have died at sea, have been seen, within a day of their death, by friends at home." The first part of Mather's account is similar to how the Flying Dutchman is portrayed in *Pirates of the Caribbean*: ferrying the dead in boats.

Belief of ghosts was widespread among mariners. How they were regarded during the 16th and 17th centuries (a belief in good and bad spirits) seems to coincide with magic (a belief in good and bad magic; this is especially evident in Salem with the use of spectral evidence). This chapter discusses ghost ships and the Flying Dutchman. To clarify, ghost ships, or phantom ships, are the spectral visions of vessels lost at sea but which still haunt the oceans. Fear of them stemmed from what they represented to sailors (that they would also get lost like the ship before it). In the case of the Flying Dutchman, there was even more to fear. Witnessing a phantom ship has been considered the worst omen a sailor could experience.[94] If such a vessel were spotted, the proper precaution was to keep close to the figurehead (the life and soul of the vessel) or quarterdeck (the preserve of officers). Glimpsing the Flying Dutchman, with the fury of a Hell-storm in its wake, was said to be worse than seeing the devil.[95]

The phantom ship, The Flying Dutchman, was supposedly a Dutch V.O.C. vessel that sank off the Cape of Good Hope. It should be noted that the name is not italicized in

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[93] Bassett 1971, 286.
[94] Brown 1973, 185.
[95] Bassett 1971, 346.

early records, and has the word "the" preceding, since it was recorded as such in documents. This is because the ship title is more of a concept than an actual name.[96] "Flying" refers to the ship's speed, and "Dutchman" derives from its country of origin. There are even mentions of the Flying Dutchman which refer to the captain, not the name of the ship.[97]

The Flying Dutchman is a sea folk belief that had been carried through oral tradition (the origin of the lore came from the mouths of sailors) many years before its first literary reference in 1790.[98] In the travel accounts of the Scotsman John MacDonald he recounted how, when off the Cape of Good Hope, Africa, "The weather was so stormy that the sailors said they saw the flying Dutchman. The common story is that this Dutchman came to the Cape in drifts of weather, and wanted to get into the harbor, but could not get a pilot to conduct her, and was lost; and that ever since, in bad weather, her vision appears. The sailors fancy that if you would hail her, she would answer like another vessel."[99] Additionally, this ghost ship was said to drop letters of those who died in barrels, and a sailor should not take them if they did not desire to be lost.[100] The themes seen in this account can be traced across many different variations of the story. This chapter will analyze the lore and historical documents to determine the likely appearance of the Flying Dutchman.

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[96] Brown 1973, 17.
[97] Mambra 2019.
[98] MacDonald 1790, 276.
[99] MacDonald 1790, 276.
[100] Bassett 1971, 346.

## Answers in Lore

The story of the Flying Dutchman has varied over the years, including the depiction of the captain. The version that is featured in this chapter depicts Captain Vanderdecken as an arrogant and determined soul, but another commonly accepted account describes him as pure evil. He attempted to round the Cape of Good Hope against a head-wind and swore he would pass it, laughing at his scared crew, smoking a pipe, and drinking a beer.[101] He threw overboard any who asked him to sail into port, and, when the "Holy Ghost" descended, he shot at it. However, the bullet pierced his own hand and paralyzed his arm. In response, Vanderdecken cursed G-d. The Holy Spirit thus cursed him to never be able to make port and be "the evil genius of the sea" with a ship of "true purgatory" and crew of "sinners of the sea." They are to eternally suffer and bring misfortune upon others. If they board a ship, wine sours and "all food becomes beans." If anyone touches letters Vanderdecken brings or sends, they will be lost.

The first description of the Flying Dutchman vessel type (more than just a mention) came five years after the first written record. An English ship carrying a group of convicts bound for Australia's Botany Bay found itself off the Cape of Good Hope in 1795. One detainee, George Barrington, remarked how superstitious the sailors were and how they feared this Dutch man-of-war running them down.[102] The boatswain, while on the voyage, said he saw the dreaded ship. He claimed, "I cou'd see all her lower-deck

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[101] Bassett 1971, 341-42.
[102] Barrington 1795, 35.

ports up, and the lights fore and aft, as if cleared for action. Now as how, d'ye see, I am sure no mortal ship could bear her low-deck ports up and not founder in this here weather: Why, the sea runs mountains high." While Barrington dismissed the lights as either fish floating in small numbers or "an animal of jelly-like substance," it is important to recognize the common motif of the vessel: in a storm (or appearing to be so in a calm) and sailing how no other should in violent winds (in this case, the detail involves a description of how heavily armed it is).[103] Other accounts around the same time report a ship-rigged vessel (three masts with square sails and topgallants; the lower mizzen sail does not have to be square) in accordance with the man-of-war description.[104]

Another tale involving the Flying Dutchman describes a group of mutineers who seized a man-of-war and rigged it to resemble the specter ship.[105] This was performed in order to terrify the crew of a pursuing vessel and thus convince them to give up the chase (similar to how a black flag functioned aboard a pirate ship). However, one day, the real Flying Dutchman encountered the mutineers' ship and sealed the fate of "their final capture and condemnation."

Over time, there was a shift from referring to the vessel as a ship to a schooner and brig.[106] The brig is the most notable because of a more recent English account, from 1886, where "the *Flying Dutchman* crossed [their] bows . . . [with] . . . the sails and spars

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[103] Barrington 1795, 36.
[104] Bassett 1971, 346.
[105] Bassett 1971, 347-48.
[106] Brown 1973, 19.

of a brig," off the coast of Australia.[107] However, this may not be referring to the Flying Dutchman but *Flying Dutchman*, a British brig that was lost off the coast of Australia in 1851.[108] This is especially evident because none of the details referred to the brig as Dutch.[109] Clearly by the late 1800s the Flying Dutchman had become a blanket term for derelict vessels that matched the general appearance, or supernatural condition, of the infamous ship. This is also seen in Captain Frank Hubert Shaw's account at sea when he spots a derelict steam ship and instantly refers to it as "The *Flying Dutchman* gone all modern."[110] So, in order to represent this famous phantom ship authentically, and to avoid as much distorted lore as possible, the earlier accounts were utilized in this study.

Dates for the Flying Dutchman's supposed final voyage vary from the 1500s to the 1700s, and a few sources provide the year 1676.[111] A more genuine date range can be traced by analyzing the captains, especially because one cannot simply search ship names. There is no record of a Captain Cornelius Vanderdecken, the name of the captain most associated with the tale.[112] There are ships without a documented captain, so it is possible that a theoretical Vanderdecken did exist. However, there is a record of another captain often associated with the story: Bernard Fokke (actually spelled Barend Fokkesz).[113]

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[107] Victor 1886, 551.
[108] Lettens 2008.
[109] Victor 1886, 551.
[110] Shaw 1947, 38.
[111] Brown 1973, 17; Barrington 1795, 35; Black Sparrows, The 2010.
[112] Lawson 1955, 17.
[113] Bruijn et al. 2020.

Fokkesz sailed *Snoeper* (Dutch for glutton), a galiot, in 1674, 1678, and 1679. There were ships which wrecked off, or on route around, the coast of the Cape of Good Hope during and after his time at sea: *Grundel* (1673),[114] *Zoetendaal* (1673),[115] *Stavenisse* (1686),[116] and *Bronstee* (1697).[117] None of these ships were captained by Fokkesz, so he may have instead been a crew member. He was considered as part of this lore because he supposedly sailed to his destinations so fast that he allegedly played dice with the devil (hence the "Flying" in the name).[118] But there is evidence that Fokkesz and the Flying Dutchman were two unrelated tales that merged over time, made apparent by collections of stories that separate them.[119] Since Fokkesz (the only captain from this lore on record) sailed in the late 17th century, this mythical Flying Dutchman most likely resembled a late 17th century Dutch V.O.C. ship with a flute-like hull, a shallow draft, a beamy hull, and narrowing topsides (or 'tumblehome').

Many seafarers believed in the tales of the Flying Dutchman, but they were not regarded by learned men until the 1700s (in the documented statements, these stories were described to have been passed down by sailors for a long time, even into the 17th century, before they were recorded). This is evident due to the lack of written accounts prior to 1790. By then, the scientific revolution was underway, and men like Barrington did not believe in specters and phantasms. Whether people believed or not, popular

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[114] Lettens 2020, "Grundel (+1673)."
[115] Lettens 2020, "Zoetendaal (+1673)."
[116] Lettens 2012.
[117] Lettens 2010.
[118] Brown 1973, 20.
[119] Lawson 1955, 16-33.

interest in this ship exploded in the 19th century, and many works of art were inspired by this lore. It seems that these stories were widespread in most ships crossing the Cape of Good Hope. This is evident in the muddying of details. One example is in the introduction to the Flying Dutchman tale, an episode referring to "the relic of the true cross" on the ship, something which a 17th century Protestant Dutch captain would not have sworn by.

## The Hull

The most important document for analyzing and recreating a Dutch ship of the late 1600s was a shipbuilding treatise from 1681 by Nicolaes Witsen.[120] Within its pages are dimensions and processes of how the Dutch constructed ships in the mid-to-late 17th century. This was utilized, in conjunction with illustrations, in order to create the ship drawings for the Flying Dutchman as a man-of-war. The biggest differences between this type and a standard Dutch merchant ship of the period are the purpose of the vessel (crew size and the number of weapons would vary depending) and its beam.[121] A man-of-war would be wider at the main deck level, with nicer curves and a flush deck (not as many stepped decks astern), to manage the guns and enhance their defenses.[122] Since these were the only major details, the model given in the treatise was followed closely.

[120] Hoving et al. 2012.
[121] Hoving et al. 2012, 35.
[122] Hoving et al. 2012, 78.

The dimensions were provided in Amsterdam feet (0.283133 meters), which were made up of eleven inches (2.574 cm each).[123] In order to measure the ship, the dimensions all had to be converted into meters. So, the measurements of 134ft x 29ft x 13ft were translated into 37.92m (length) x 8.21m (width) x 3.68m (height to the prow) for an average Dutch pinas, or flute ship, of that era. Beginning with the hull, these dimensions were projected onto a ship's lines drawings like the one reconstructed for the 17th century flute hulls found during excavations at the Burmeister & Wain (B&W) Company site in Copenhagen, Denmark.[124]

In order to gather more details about the hull, the full ship drawing from the translation of the treatise was also utilized.[125] Like the B&W hulls, identified measurements (see above) were projected onto a printed picture, and scaling was applied to find certain actual distances and dimensions. Since this image was divided into two pages, an additional scale had to be incorporated to make the drawings match (Fig. 1).

[123] Hoving et al. 2012, 35.
[124] Lemée 2006, 158.
[125] Hoving et al. 2012, 178-79.

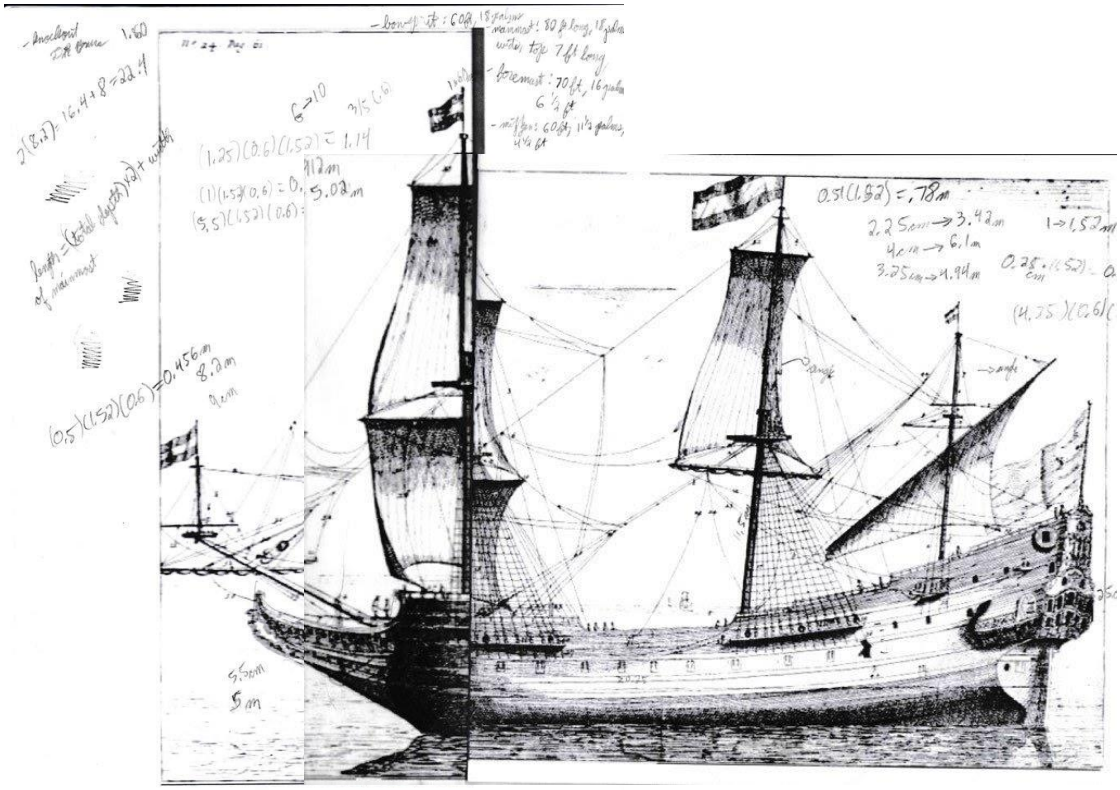

FIG. 1. Drawing of a Dutch ship from Witsen's treatise. Reprinted from Hoving et al. 2012, 178-79, with original notes.

To better understand the hull's details, relevant images were analyzed, such as a detailed ship plate, pictures of *Batavia*'s replica (*Batavia* was a 1628 Dutch ship), and an etching of a Dutch ship (this one would become especially helpful because it had topgallant masts) (Fig. 2).[126] These images sufficed to create a hypothesized hull.

[126] Falconer 1762; Malis 2007, "Ship Batavia 1"; Malis 2007, "Ship Batavia 2"; Hollar 1647.

FIG. 2. *Naves Bellicae Hollandicae*, 1647. Reprinted from Hollar 1647.

These sources were used to formulate the curves of the hull as well as create the shape of the rudder, wales, and profile. Dutch ships often had a lion figurehead at the prow, as seen on the *Batavia* replica.[127] As for the gunports, a mix of details were discovered about the number of guns and gun decks. Since the ship was a man-of-war, I determined that the ship most likely had two gun decks with twelve gunports (and two higher on the stern). Additionally, there were most likely two gunports under the transom. Five gunports are behind shrouds, which was acceptable because ships often had more gunports than guns to intimidate their enemies, and the Flying Dutchman is known for its high intimidation factor.

[127] Malis 2007, "Ship Batavia 1."

## Spars

The locations of the mast steps and rake of the masts were based on an image from Witsen's treatise (Fig. 3).[128] The foremast stood vertically while the main and mizzen masts were both angled aft. The foremast and main mast heels were stepped into the keelson while the mizzen mast was stepped into the main deck.

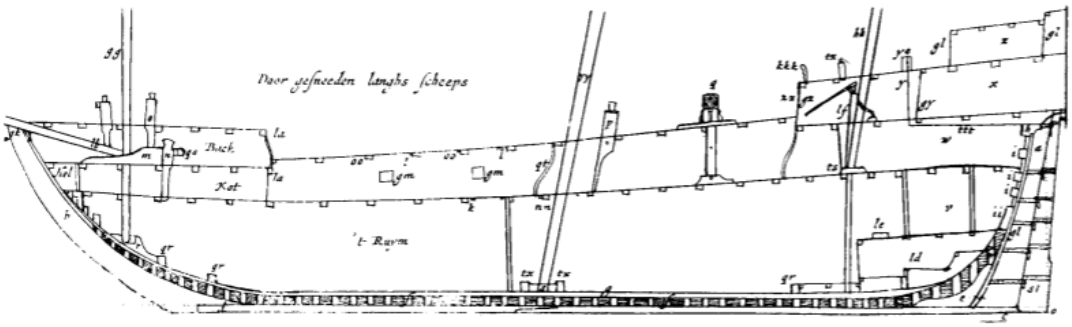


FIG. 3. A longitudinal section of a Dutch ship that includes mast raking. Reprinted from Hoving et al. 2012, 156.

Determining the number of upper masts proved to be tricky, particularly with the topgallant masts. Images of contemporary ships show some with, and others without, topgallants. Since this was a ship known to release all sails to run down its prey, and topgallant measurements were included in Witsen's treatise, they were included. The bowsprit supported a spritsail topmast, a rig typically found on ships that sailed in the 1600s. The fore and main masts included topgallants, and the mizzen had only a topmast. The lower mizzen mast had a lateen sail while all the others had square sails.

[128] Hoving et al. 2012, 156.

Witsen's treatise provides lengths and diameters of these spars in Amsterdam feet (0.281311m), palms (10cm), and ells (69cm).[129] However, doublings had to be estimated from the ship drawing that was used for the hull. The masts and yards were converted from Amsterdam feet to meters (and consequently centimeters) to accurately measure the spars (see Table 4 in Appendix A for more details).

Spar details that involved educated conjecture, based on paintings and drawings, included doublings and wooldings. Doublings for lower masts appeared twice as long as the upper. There were three wooldings on the foremast and four on the mainmast. Additionally, based on the *Batavia* replica, there was a knee supporting the heel of the topmast.[130] Finally, to complete the spars, the Flying Dutchman would have flown Dutch colours.

## Rigging

Details about rigging can be found in the treatise, an etching of the Dutch ship from 1647, and paintings from the era. This includes works from the Dutch painters Willem Van de Velde the Elder and Younger such as *Dutch Ships near the Coast*,[131] *Dutch Vessels Inshore and Men Bathing*,[132] *A Captured Dutch Fluyt In A Calm*,[133] and

[129] Hoving et al. 2012, 142.
[130] Malis 2007, "Ship Batavia 1."
[131] Van de Velde I 1650.
[132] Van de Velde II 1665-70 A.
[133] Van de Velde II 1663-1707.

*Calm - Dutch Ship Coming to Anchor* (Fig. 4).[134] Since examples of ships with topgallant masts were rare, conjecture was necessary.

FIG. 4. *Calm - Dutch Ship Coming to Anchor*, 1665-70. Reprinted from Van de Velde II 1665-70 B.

The Van de Veldes were a family of artists who worked in the 1600s and who were well known for their paintings, particularly of seascapes.[135] While Willem Van de Velde the Elder did paint ships, as seen with *Dutch Ships near the Coast*, his son, Willem Van de Velde the Younger, became a leading painter of Dutch marine activity of the later 17th century. Van de Velde the Elder was better known for his monochrome

[134] Van de Velde II 1665-70 B.
[135] National Gallery Editors 2020.

ship representations on panels. The family lived in Amsterdam until a French Invasion in 1672 when they left for England.

The blocks, deadeyes, lanyards, and hearts were also evident on the Flying Dutchman. The deadeyes were used mostly for shrouds and backstays while hearts were reserved for stays. The deadeyes were rounded and thick, with a horizontally moving wood grain, because the ship was from the second half of the 17th century. Paired deadeyes with lanyards were lashed to the base of shrouds with a line through each hole. Lanyards were also fitted abaft the mizzen topmast. Hearts, a sturdier way of adjusting tension, were not completely round but had one flat end.

## Spectral Conclusions

The storm whipped the ship back, and forth, throwing men into the starving sea.[136] The ship creaked and groaned in protest, but Captain Vanderdecken pressed her harder.

"You are MAD, captain!" the pilot argued.

"This mutiny, I hear?" Vanderdecken threw the pilot off the whipstaff and took his place. "For nine weeks, this tempest has not taken us, and we are not giving up now!"

"Captain, the men—"

"Can follow orders!"

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[136] Bassett 1971, 346.

The ship jerked to port, and the pilot lost his footing. Vanderdecken crazily smiled and threw the pilot overboard. He continued to ride the ship through the storm, making an oath to keep sailing until the day of judgement. So the story goes, he still does to this very day.

This passage summarizes the most common tale tied to this infamous phantom ship. Passed down by contemporary sailors, the tale gained traction amongst the learned by the late 18th century. It was not until the 19th century, however, that it caught on in popular lore. Unlike other folkloric phantom ships, the Flying Dutchman was only believed by seafarers during the 17th and 18th centuries.

The mighty Flying Dutchman, if it ever existed, is shown here as a ship-rigged man-of-war with fore and mainmasts that rise to topgallant height. The original ship may have been about the average size of a Dutch flute (about 37.92m long by 8.21m wide). The nameless ship most likely sunk in the late 1600s, captained by either an unrecorded Vanderdecken or Barend Fokkesz (if he was not part of an unrelated folk belief).

The ship likely had three masts; the fore was vertical with no rake while the main and mizzen angled aft. The bowsprit had a topmast with a spritsail, following the trends of the era, with the topmast connected to the bowsprit by a knee. Atop each mast was a flag, most likely flying Dutch colours, and a much bigger flag flew at the stern.

The sources utilized for the recreation were largely lore, ship drawings, paintings, and a translation of Witsen's treatise. The lore of this doomed ship passed between sailors long before it was written down by John MacDonald in 1790, so finding

truth based solely on human memory and word of mouth may be difficult. There is plenty of room for human imagination and embellishment. The story people now understand about the Flying Dutchman is different from what was first written down.

In order to understand the original Flying Dutchman, one must pay more attention to earlier accounts than later ones, and Barrington's account can be key to visualizing the ship by describing it as a man-of-war. Obviously, the most conjecture regarding this drawing comes from the lore, but based on the available sources, it likely appeared as Barrington described. While some speculation has to be made about a phantom ship that may-or-may-not have even existed, the rigging drawing is an educated guess as to what the ship may have looked like had it really gotten caught in a storm all those years ago (Fig. 5).

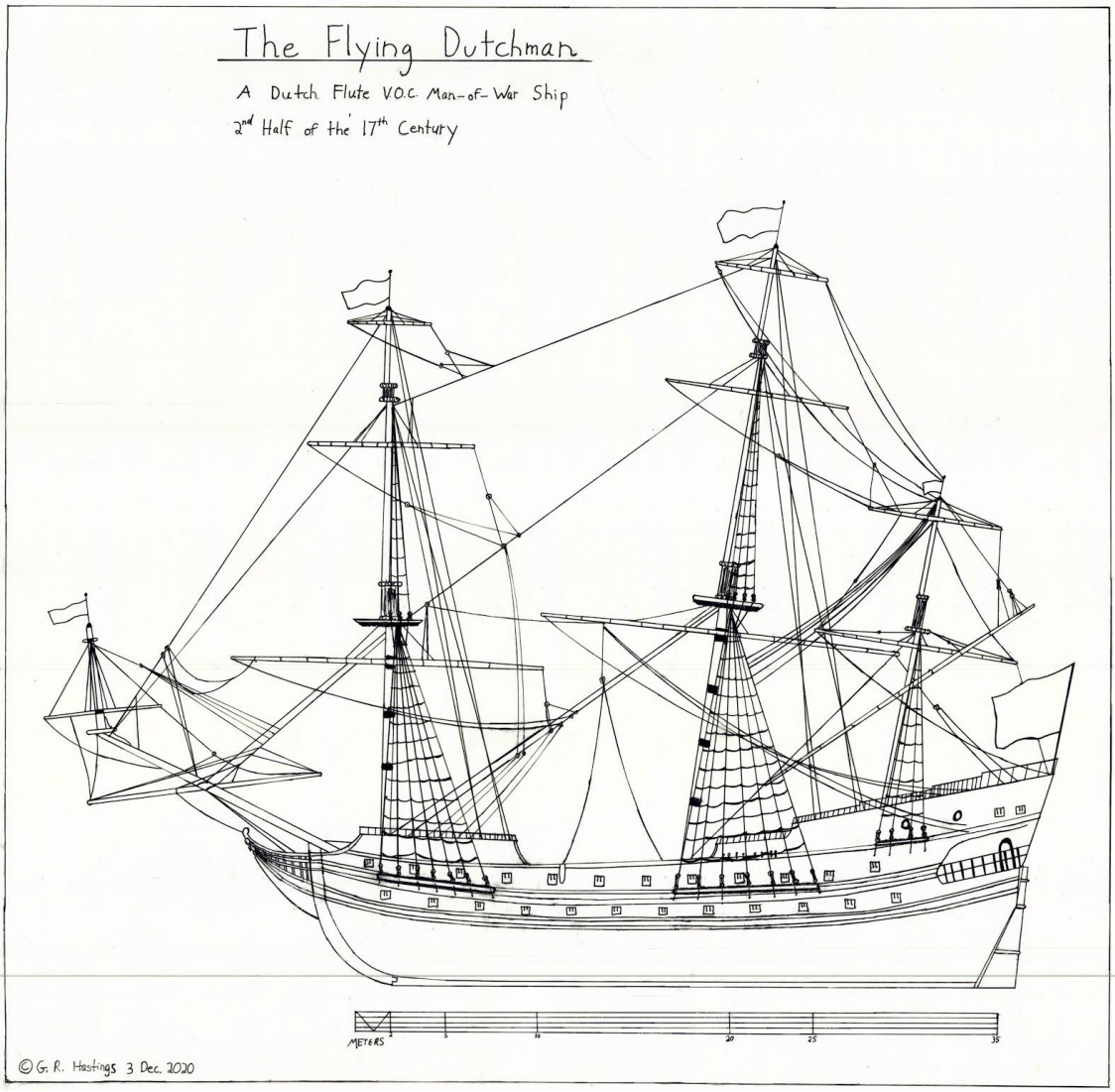


FIG. 5. A conjectural rigging plan of the Flying Dutchman drawn by the author.

CHAPTER V

THE HEADLESS HORSELESS MEN

*"Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle, rough quarries, rocks and heads whose hills touch heaven, it was my hint to speak, - such was the process. And of the Cannibals that each other eat, the Anthropophagi and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders."*[137]

## Introduction

Shakespeare may have been writing fiction for *Othello*, but he was referencing fantastical beings discussed in many travel accounts from around the world, including the one at the end of the list: a headless man with a face on its chest, or the Blemmyae.[138] The anthropomorphic creature seen in Shakespeare's work was mentioned in exploration literature of the English Renaissance edited and published by Richard Hakluyt the Younger.

In 1589, Richard Hakluyt published the first edition of his most renowned work, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, an exhaustive collection of expeditions beyond the British Isles.[139] Within its pages were accounts of those traveling far to the east, south, and west, places the English had never

[137] Shakespeare 2012, 1.3.143-45.
[138] Atsma 2011.
[139] Hakluyt 1589 A.

been.[140] Included were descriptions of various exotic fauna that puzzled the minds of contemporary readers; indeed, some of them still baffle modern scholars. Hakluyt, an academic himself, desired to present true tales of English voyages, but his works incorporated details about Amazons, giants, and a race of headless men with faces on their chests (Fig. 6).[141] The seafaring explorers of the 16th and 17th centuries, and their beliefs about fantastical anthropomorphic creatures found on land, will be analyzed largely by focusing on tales of the Blemmyae found in *The Principal Navigations*, particularly those by Sir John Mandeville, John Locke, David Ingram, and Sir Walter Raleigh and Laurence Keymis, a trusted friend of Raleigh's.

[140] Hakluyt 1589 A.
[141] Moseley 1983, 116-38.

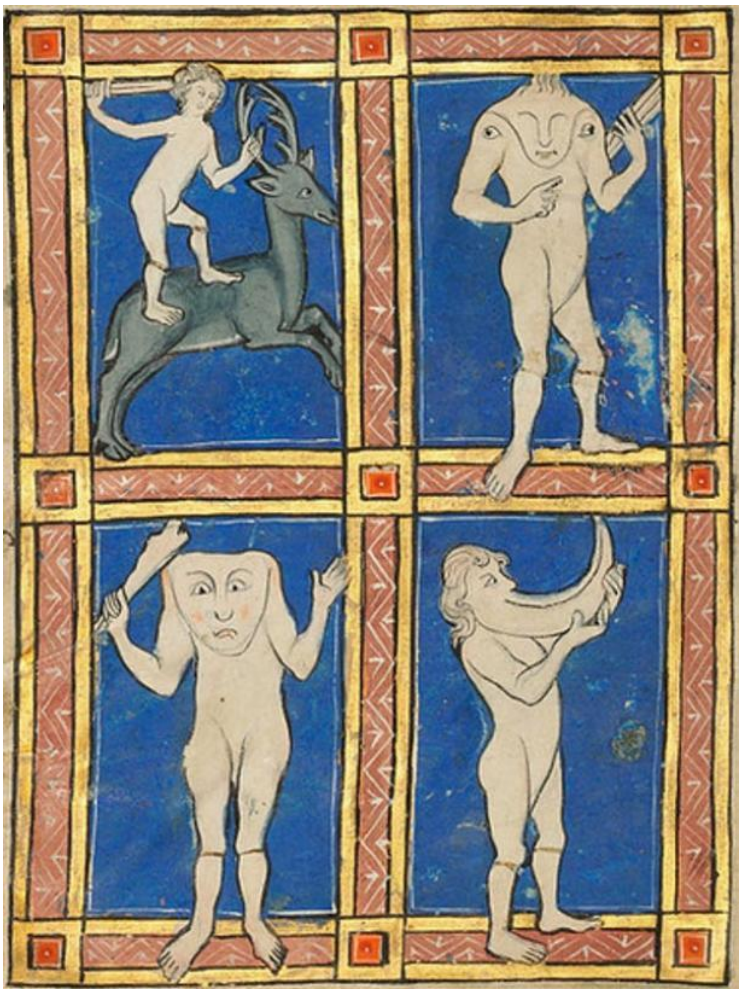

FIG. 6. 13th century illustration of various fantastical anthropomorphs. Reprinted from Dhwty 2018.

This chapter will provide a background for the historical context of the main accounts before each tale and narrator is analyzed. It should be noted that the travels of Sir John Mandeville and David Ingram were not reprinted in the second edition of *The Principal Navigations*, and the reasoning as to why will be discussed further.[142] Also, it should be mentioned that since the second voyage to Guiana, South America was

[142] Mancall 2007, 232.

directed by Laurence Keymis, a man sponsored by Raleigh, that venture will be treated as an extension of his own. By investigating the Blemmyae as a microcosm of how English seagoing explorers understood fantastical beings, one can further understand the sailors, their psyches, and how they interacted with the world around them.

## Background

When analyzing these creatures, it is necessary to define what they were to the people of Renaissance England, starting with their early influences. They were known as Βλεμμυας, Βλεμμυαι, or Βλεμμυες in ancient Greece, which translated to Blemmyas, Blemmyae, or Blemmyes, meaning gazing from the middle (*blemma* and *mesos*).[143] Also Classically called *akephaloi*, Sternophthalmoi ("Chest-Eyes"), or *acephali* ("Headless"), Herodotus first recorded accounts of them in the 5th century B.C.E. in *Histories*.[144] He described a group of *acephali* as men with eyes in their chests and living in the wooded western region (Herodotus's map is distorted so that the Nile runs west) of Libya, or Africa, among other beasts such as the Kynokephaloi ("Dog-Headed"). According to Bochart, the word Blemmyae was possibly a Hebrew derivative, meaning 'no brain,' perhaps insinuating stupidity.[145] Another translation is that the name stems from "the alleged Coptic 'blind'" or perhaps from Blemy, an Ethiopian king, as suggested by the

[143] Atsma 2011.
[144] Herodotus 1920, 4.191.4.
[145] Chambers 1680.

Greek writer Nonnus.[146] Antique and medieval writers searched for etymologies in names to define their nature, but these writers may have over-analyzed the title.[147]

The word and idea of monstrous 'Blemmyes' was known to have been popular by the mid-3rd century B.C.E., as evident by the Greek poet, Theocritus', "curse" in *Idylls*: "Mayest thou wander by the remotest Ethiopians and feed thy flock by the Blemmyes' rock from whence Nile is not yet visible!"[148]

Strabo, however, in his 1st century B.C.E. work, *The Geography*, gave a different interpretation.[149] In *The Geography*, Blemmyae was not the name of a monster but instead a tribe from the lower parts of Nubia towards the Red Sea along the Nile. They were Ethiopian but tended to be nomadic.[150] Blemmyes did not exist in large numbers and were not warlike, but they were feared because they raided settlements in a piratical fashion. Strabo grouped them together with other raiders such as the Megabari, Troglodytes, and Nubians. The Blemmyes terrorized Egypt through the centuries and were even recorded during the Roman period.

Strabo, before his death around 21 B.C.E., personally knew Egypt and the regions to the south through his acquaintance with C. Cornelius Gallus, explorer of Arabia and prefect of Egypt under Octavius in 30 B.C.E. So, we can consider him a reliable source in gaining information about who these supposed pirates were. This has

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[146] Derrett 2002, 468.
[147] Friedman 1981, 109-10.
[148] Derrett 2002, 467 (translation); Theocritus 1901, 7.113-114 (original).
[149] Dhwty 2018; Strabo 1903, XVII.2-53 (original).
[150] Derrett 2002, 468.

importance regarding their origins. Furthermore, Blemmyae will continue to describe the fantastical interpretations through this thesis, and Blemmyes will refer to the people.

There are a few other mentions of these anthropomorphic creatures in antiquity before the medieval era. Pomponius Mela, in *De Situ Orbis* around 43 C.E., described Blemmyae as having no head with mouths and eyes on their breasts.[151] Mela, in consequence, was the first to make the connection between the monstrous description and the name Blemmyae.[152] Similarly, in 79 C.E, Pliny the Elder, in *The Natural History* (5.8), describes Blemmyae as beasts lacking heads and with mouths and eyes located on their breasts.[153] Louis Marcus (a commentator) in 1829 suggested that the detail of no heads in Pliny's description came from the circumstance of how they were seen. When the Persians invaded Ethiopia in the Classical era, the Ethiopians typically fell to one knee and bowed their head to their breasts to escape the hooves of the enemy horses, as the horses would avoid trampling them.[154] Solinus in the 3rd century C.E. in *Polyhistor* went as far as saying they were "believed to be dismembered in the part where the head is."[155] The representations of Sternophthalmoi continued as popular subjects in medieval bestiaries and *Terra Incognita* map illustrations.[156]

One medieval reference appeared in the sermon *Ad Fratrem in Eremo* from an unknown "Belgian forger" in the 13th century.[157] The man described headless men and

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[151] Druce 1915, 137.
[152] Derrett 2002, 469.
[153] Pliny 1893.
[154] Pliny 1893.
[155] Druce 1915, 137.
[156] Atsma 2011.
[157] Friedman 1981, 60.

women with eyes on their chests when he was a Bishop of Hippo and a missionary in Ethiopia. He allegedly observed they married but took only one day of the year to copulate with their wives and subsequently did not hold "priestly duties."

Another prominent tale of Blemmyae from medieval times, other than that of Sir John Mandeville (later published in *Principal Navigations*), is the story of King Alexander, documented during the 14th century C.E.[158] The Sternophthalmoi found in its pages were introduced into French translations of the Romance of Alexander (an expansion upon Alexander the Great's adventures) to describe the various types of creatures the king and his knights encountered while they were on horseback (Fig. 7). After crossing a river over to an island, they met anthropomorphic beings, sometimes depicted with clubs (a symbol of uncivilized or savage races), who were gold-colored, six feet tall, and had eyes and mouths in their chests with a beard that covered the lower part of their bodies down to their knees.[159] Supposedly, Alexander the Great captured thirty of these *acephali* to display in a sort of Cabinet of Curiosities, but there is no further account of them.

[158] Druce 1915, 137.
[159] Friedman 1981, 135; Druce 1915, 138.

FIG. 7. Alexander approaching the Blemmyae by Master of Lord Hoo's Book of Hours (1444-45). Reprinted from Talbot 1444, f. 21v.

In medieval art, the Blemmyae were one of the commonly depicted "Plinian races."[160] One example is a pair of Blemmyae, carved as "wing-subjects," depicted on the Norwich cathedral church in England.[161] Each carving is headless with a face on its chest, a girdled and short-sleeved tunic, boots, and a sword. On a carving at another English cathedral church, Ripon, the depicted Blemmyae holds a large club (Fig. 8).[162]

[160] Friedman 1981, 135.
[161] Druce 1915, 138.
[162] Druce 1915, 139.

By the time Hakluyt the Younger recorded his tales in the first edition of *Principal Navigations*, these fantastical creatures were long embedded into the public's mind.

FIG. 8. Reproduction of Blemmyae found on choir stalls of Ripon Cathedral. Reprinted from Youle 2017.

## Sir John Mandeville and *Travels*

Sir John Mandeville's *Travels*, published in Latin, made up the largest section of Hakluyt's 1589 book, but a major reason he considered not including it was because of the many versions already published.[163] By around 1356-1366, Mandeville's book, originally written in French, was already circulating in Europe.[164] Christopher Columbus studied *Travels* to gain information about China in preparation for his voyage to what he believed to be India.[165] Martin Frobisher relied on the book's information while off Baffin Bay, Canada in 1576. Many explorers during the medieval and Renaissance eras

[163] Hakluyt 1589 A.
[164] Moseley 1983, 9.
[165] Moseley 1983, 9.

regarded the geographical information in *Travels* as fact, but it was later mocked after 1600 for its fantastical elements. The original book was recorded in French, but this was a commonly understood language for a literary, secular English-born writer in the early 1300s since many were Anglo-Norman French. Translating the book into Latin is evidence of how seriously the Renaissance English took the tale, as it was a language widely used for literary and scholarly purposes.[166] The book was widely distributed in several languages, and by 1500, copies were translated into Czech, Dutch, and Danish.[167]

Despite Mandeville's book finding a broad audience, nothing is known about the author other than what is found in the work. The author could have created a fictional persona instead of actually being the knight who travelled from around 1322 to 1356, served the Sultan of Egypt and the Great Khan, and went as far as China. It is possible that the author was a Mandeville of Black Notley in Essex, but there is no conclusive evidence. Nonetheless, the so-called Sir John Mandeville was indeed English, evident from his distinctly English references such as barnacle geese which breed in Britain. Mandeville, either a traveler himself or a compiler of expeditions under a false alias, did largely help explorers since global geography was vague to medieval Europeans (although they did know that the world was round).[168]

Despite its useful aspects, the fantastical elements in *Travels* made many later scholars and readers disregard it (Fig. 9). Mandeville described various kinds of people

[166] Posner and Sala 2019.
[167] Moseley 1983, 10.
[168] Moseley 1983, 14-15.

he encountered on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands off India, including cannibals, Cyclopes, and *acephali*.[169] The Sternophthalmoi were not listed by name but by description. Mandeville says that one kind of person living on these isles was an "ugly folk without heads, who have eyes in each shoulder; their mouths are round, like a horseshoe, in the middle of their chest," while another of these "headless men" had "eyes and mouths on their backs." After Renaissance Europeans became more familiar with the actual world, however, Mandeville's information became outdated, and the details of his bizarre creatures were recognized as fictional.

FIG. 9. Sebastian Münster's 1544 engraving of Mandeville's fantastical creatures from *Cosmographia*. Representation, from left to right, of Mandeville's monopod, a Cyclops, conjoined twins, Blemmyae, and Kynokephaloi. Reprinted from Dhwty 2018.

[169] Moseley 1983, 136-37.

Pre-Mandeville European descriptions of Blemmyae placed them in Africa, whether in Libya or Ethiopia, but not in India.[170] This new location is plausible, as a century after Mandeville's tale, Andrea Bianco created a map of the world in 1436, marking one of these beings in mainland India (Fig. 10).[171] This could be a direct result of the influence of Mandeville's works or might indicate that these creatures were already part of Indian culture.


FIG. 10. Andrea Bianco's map (1436) with an enlarged Blemmyae. Reprinted from Siebold 2016, 11.

[170] Atsma 2011; Chambers 1680.
[171] Siebold 2016, 1-11.

In Indian Buddhist scripture, *Samyutta-nikaya* of the *Sutta-pitaka* and *Vinaya-pitaka*, a renowned pupil of Gotama Buddah, Moggallana the Great, was celebrated for his magical abilities. [172] Moggallana had visions of twenty-one creatures being pecked and dismembered by various birds; the twenty-one had violated the Buddhist rule of not taking a life and were released from their hell to "complete their punishments prior to being reborn in some evil condition." Number sixteen on the list was a grotesque, headless trunk with its eyes and mouth on its chest and possibly a brain between its shoulders, maybe in reference to someone "of bad color," "ugly," "dwarfish," or "hunchbacked." Moggallana identified this creature as Harika, describing "Snatcher" (*harin* translates to "taking"), and the translators of the *Samyutta* included the passage: "This being was a bandit named Harika in this very city Rajagaha."[173]

In the text, Harika was described as a *coraghataka*, meaning thief-slaughterer (a technical name for "executioner") or "cut-throat," so he was headless in consequence of "decapitating thieves by way of their last torture." He must now suffer the same consequence. This *acephali* was most likely introduced to Buddhism around the first half of the 1st century B.C.E., and it may have been the result of Buddhists interpreting piratical peoples, as described by Strabo, as hellish creatures come back to enact karma upon those in the Nile Valley.[174] However, since the idea of the Blemmyae is rather

[172] Derrett 2002, 461-62.
[173] Derrett 2002, 463-64.
[174] Derrett 2002, 472.

simple, there is also the chance that the Indian culture formed it independently, as may have been the case in South America.

Mandeville might have heard about some creatures from Buddhist literature, and assumed that they were inhabitants, but maybe he found a deeper connection. India had been in contact with Egypt by means of sea and land since the 3rd century B.C.E. at the latest, and it is evident that Greece and Egypt had been in contact before then.[175] As a result, the European tradition connects with the Indian one through Africa and consequently Greece. Since India had adopted Western Greek motifs, it made some consequently Buddhist ideas more understandable, thus accessible, to Westerners.[176]

Sir John Mandeville supposedly heard of *acephali* while in India, but it does not mean they were specifically of the Blemmyae type. A modern-day writer, John Friedman, classifies men with eyes on their chests differently than the Epiphagi (Fig. 6).[177] These beings are also headless with mouths on their chests, but they "are a Nilotic or Indian race" with "eyes on their shoulders" instead of their chests and were sometimes described as bright gold (paralleling the tale of King Alexander). Viewing the Epiphagi and Blemmyae as two different species is surely less plausible when analyzing how the idea of the headless men traveled to India and became a part of the culture there. Also, upon scanning Bianco's map, one can see how the face, including the eyes, of the *acephali* in India was drawn on the chest (Fig. 10). Mandeville's was the only medieval

[175] Derrett 2002, 465.
[176] Derrett 2002, 473.
[177] Friedman 1981, 15.

English account of India, and Hakluyt included it in his original collection along with one from Africa before transitioning to different parts of the world. Perhaps Hakluyt was attempting to establish English precedence in India, which was the domain of Portuguese traders in 1589.

## Sir John Locke in Guinea

In 1554, Sir George Barne, Sir John Yorke, Thomas Locke, Anthonie Hickman, and Edward Castelin set out on a second voyage to Guinea in Africa, an expedition captained by Sir John Locke.[178] The first voyage in the previous year, according to Hakluyt, was neither of much interest nor had Locke as part of the crew. The explorers left the Thames on October 11th with two ships of "seven score tons [140 tons] each, and one of ninety tons."[179] Captain John Locke, a man with one other recorded prior voyage (to Jerusalem in 1553), traveled with family; the merchant Thomas Locke was his half-brother, and Anthonie Hickman was their brother-in-law since he was married to Rose Locke.[180] Captain John Locke recounted the voyage to Hakluyt, so this account will be therefore analyzed as his story.[181]

Not much is known about Captain John Locke, and Hakluyt even provided a disclaimer before his account, saying that he has "no perfect information."[182] However, despite Hakluyt possibly expressing doubt about the validity of his source, he included

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[178] Hakluyt 1589 A, 154.
[179] Hakluyt 1589 A, 155; Locke 1853, 350.
[180] Locke 1853, 350-59.
[181] Gillespie 1920, 202; Hakluyt 1589 A, 154.
[182] Hakluyt 1589 A, 154.

Locke's story in the book either to make his collection as comprehensive as possible or because of his connections to the Locke family. A letter dated 1575 from James Alday to the "Worshipful Mr. Michael Locke, Agent in London for the Muscovie Co.," was included in Hakluyt's *Diverse Voyages* from 1582.[183] The exploration of Sir Martin Frobisher towards Cathay in 1574, recorded in Hakluyt's *Voyages*, was written by Michael Locke, and he was also on that voyage. When introducing the book, and discussing this passage, Hakluyt describes how Michael Locke had Master John Verazano's map of the Cathay region. Hakluyt continues on to praise Michael Locke, "a man for his knowledge in divers languages, and especially in cosmographie, able to do his country good, and worthy in my judgment for the manifolde and good partes in him, of good reputation and better fortune." The family evidently made an impression on Hakluyt, and Captain John Locke's travels to Jerusalem were incorporated in his *Voyages*.[184]

During his 1554 voyage to Guinea in Africa, Locke described encountering the fantastical creatures last seen in the works of Sir John Mandeville.[185] His expedition voyaged to the east coast of Africa where they met the Christian Emperor of Ethiopia, Prester John, also known as Papa Johannes or Pean Juan (great John). According to Locke, Emperor John had an empire that spanned far beyond the Nile and extended to the coasts of the Indian and Red Seas; he reigned over several people such as the

[183] Locke 1853, 349.
[184] Locke 1853, 350.
[185] Hakluyt 1589 A, 169.

Risophagi, Clodi, Babylonii, Molili, Axiunitae, and Molibae. Also, in the area known as Troglodytica were people who lived in dens and caves, ate serpents, and grinned and chattered instead of speaking. Locke then adds, "There are also people without heads, called Blemines, having their eyes and mouth in their breast."

This mention of the Blemmyae is particularly interesting because of the name and their identity. There have been various spellings of this name but none quite like this, so it appears that Locke was relatively unfamiliar with the name. However, it is similar enough that he may had heard of them before, if even in passing. Moreover, this alternative spelling is not surprising since 16th and 17th century English spelling was not standardized.

The Blemines are depicted differently than in other accounts where they have been the subject of fascination, gruesome imagery, or cultural survey. Even Mandeville incorporates them into a grouping of bizarre monsters.[186] Locke instead describes the Blemines as another tribe, a people within the realm of reality who simply do not have heads. However, Locke never saw an *acephali* and simply trusted Emperor John's information.

The Locke family had a reputation, particularly with Hakluyt, and must have been well-educated, especially Michael Locke.[187] As a result, John Locke must have known of the *Travels* by Sir John Mandeville and been familiar with references to his

[186] Moseley 1983, 137.
[187] Locke 1853, 349.

mention of *acephali*. And he did read Pliny and, thus, knew of his depictions of the anthropomorphs.[188]

One other aspect of interest in this account regards the description of Troglodytica. In Locke's work, it is the name of a region of cave dwellers and snake eaters.[189] However, in *The Geography* by Strabo, Troglodytes were a tribe of people grouped together with the Blemmyes.[190] This could either display recorded misinformation or the development of lore, further emphasizing the importance of this account.

Captain John Locke's report was an example of how some 16th century English explorers saw the world, and a later passage in his journey emphasizes how he felt about what he saw. In his account, he repeated a tale told to him by Richard Chancellor about Sebastian Cabot, who sailed near the coast of Brazil and was suddenly lifted from the sea and cast onto land.[191] To justify the tale, Locke reflected upon other bizarre natural phenomenon to describe, "the narrownesse of man's understanding and knowledge, in comparison of her [i.e. nature's] mightier power," that he must "confesse with Plinie, that nothing is to her [i.e. nature] impossible, the least part of whose power is not yet knowne to men." He then related his belief that the many things seen by his men were worth recording and interesting to read.

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[188] Gillespie 1920, 203.
[189] Hakluyt 1589 A, 169.
[190] Derrett 2002, 468.
[191] Gillespie 1920, 203.

Captain John Locke's report is an indication of how English intellectuals and explorers of his time thought, including their willingness to accept tales and folk beliefs as plausible. These men traveled to places they had never been and seen things people of their day would consider impossible, and some were prepared to report anything. Perhaps they felt it was better to recount everything they heard and sort through it later. Explorers of this age had to accept that nothing was impossible if they were to learn about the possible. Also, both the explorers and their readers back home craved a variety of interesting, if not entirely accurate, tales of the unusual.

## David Ingram in the New World

In the beginning of December 1568, thirteen years after the last mention of a Sternophthalmoi, David Ingram, along with about 100 other sailors, were marooned ashore after a failed Spanish raid with Sir John Hawkins in the Gulf of Mexico.[192] From there, he, Richard Browne, and Richard Twide trekked north on foot until they reached the region of modern-day Halifax, Nova Scotia and boarded a French ship back to Europe.[193] Before beginning the account, Hakluyt included a disclaimer and treated it more like a testimony for a trial. The editor surely had doubts of its validity since it was not recorded until years after the event, and Ingram was the only source for this tale as both Browne and Twide had died before it was written down. However, Hakluyt prefaced the account with the phrasing "of sundry things which he with others did see,"

[192] Hakluyt 1589 B, 557.
[193] Mancall 2007, 191.

so the editor did not discount the various creatures, probably because there was no way to refute Ingram.[194] Hakluyt personally accepted the unusual until proven otherwise, but this story was not included in his second edition of *Principal Navigations*.

Most of what is known about David Ingram is found in his account (also known as his relation). The only years on record of his existence are from around 1567-1582.[195] Ingram was a sailor from Barking, Essex and probably was as well-travelled as a typical Elizabethan seafarer.[196] He may have voyaged more than other Elizabethans but also may have had little to compare with what he saw in America, which may explain some of his strange descriptions.

The lack of accuracy of dates and locations in this account reflects Ingram's lack of education compared to Locke or even Mandeville.[197] Ingram was most likely illiterate, which means that he related his tale verbally.[198] This is problematic because he had to recount what he thought happened and also answer leading questions to further the story beyond his own knowledge. After 1582, when he was summoned for questioning by Francis Walsingham, a state secretary of Queen Elizabeth I, Ingram disappeared from the historical records.[199]

One other important detail about Ingram was his professed strong belief in religion.[200] Ingram refers to the native deity Colluchio, or "Devil" as he calls it, and he

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[194] Hakluyt 1589 B, 557.
[195] Fritze 1993, 131.
[196] Toohey 2017.
[197] Hakluyt 1589 B, 557.
[198] Toohey 2017.
[199] Fritze 1993, 131.
[200] Toohey 2017.

even mentions encountering the devil.[201] Ingram says he wandered into a poor man's house to "see the said Colluchio, or Devil, with very great eyes like a black Calfe." Upon seeing the Colluchio, Richard Browne blessed himself, "In the name of the Father, the Sonne, and the holy Ghost," while Richard Twide yelled at the so-called devil, "I defie thee and all thy workes." In response, the purported devil ran away to not be seen again. Ingram believed that the Bible had expelled a devil, so he appears to be someone willing to believe in a Sternophthalmoi, especially with it supposedly standing in front of him.

After Spanish forces obliterated most of the fleet of John Hawkins at San Juan de Ulua during the English expedition to the Spanish West Indies, Ingram found himself stranded with 100 or so colleagues about six leagues west of "La mina, or Rio de Minas," and about 140 leagues northwest from the cape of Florida.[202] He did not provide specific dates, but he moved north with his party, coming across various peoples and creatures. When listing animals he witnessed, Ingram describes one in particular that was a "strange beast bigger than a Beare, he had neither head nor neck; his eyes and mouth were in his breast."[203] Ingram continues to recount it as, "very ugly to beholde, and cowardly of kinde. It bareth a very fine skin like a Rat, full of silver haires."

The creature presumably seen by Ingram, and those with him, matches the description of a Blemmyae with the tall, headless figure with eyes and a mouth on the chest, but that is about the only accurate comparison.[204] In every other account,

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[201] Hakluyt 1589 B, 561.
[202] Fritze 1993, 131; Hakluyt 1589 B, 557.
[203] Hakluyt 1589 B, 560.
[204] Hakluyt 1589 B, 560.

Blemmyae have either been people or monstrous varieties of people, but here Ingram categorized them as beasts with the other animals. Was this a result of racism, as different varieties of humans may have seemed like beasts to the English sailor?

Mandeville grouped similar creatures into the monster category, but he did so with other odd human forms, not animals.[205] Ingram may be describing something that was not human at all but more akin to a bear, especially with its rat-like skin.[206] The description of "cowardly" does not match the fierce antagonists described in other tales. The hair detailed as silver instead of something closer to gold, as seen in the account of King Alexander, signifies that these beasts purportedly seen by Ingram were not exactly the same as Blemmyae.[207] However, lighting and other environmental factors could have drastically changed the perception of hair color. Furthermore, the fact that Ingram supposedly witnessed this figure himself makes this account a rare anomaly.

The Blemmyae were reported in Africa and India, but they had not previously been encountered in the New World, at least by the English. It is possible Ingram witnessed an animal he perceived as a Sternophthalmoi. This could be a gray animal with a short neck and pug face like a seal or a large rodent.[208] The description of eyes and mouth in the breast could have even been a result of the idea of the Blemmyae being planted in Ingram's brain. He relayed his explanation based on what he knew, suggesting that common sailors had heard of Sternophthalmoi.

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[205] Moseley 1983, 137.
[206] Hakluyt 1589 B, 560.
[207] Druce 1915, 138.
[208] Hakluyt 1589 B, 560.

Ingram may have sailed to Africa before his North American trek for in the list of beasts Ingram provides he includes elephants, something unmistakably foreign to the Americas. Between his time in South America and over ten years of traveling abroad, he may have confused details.[209] While it is possible that he saw a Blemmyae-like animal in America, it is just as plausible that he saw it in Africa, especially since it is grouped with the elephant in his relation. So, Ingram may have imposed his preconceived notion of *acephali* on to a similar-appearing animal. The elapsed time between Ingram's travels and the writing of his account, its recording via narration, and Ingram's evident confusion, makes it no wonder Hakluyt did not include this tale in his second edition.

## Two Voyages to Guiana

Sir Walter Raleigh was an English adventurer, writer, colonial organizer, and favorite of Queen Elizabeth I.[210] He was knighted in 1585 but later imprisoned and beheaded in 1618 by the order of King James I for crimes against Spain during peacetime. Raleigh was born around the time of Captain John Locke's journey to Guinea and made a name for himself globally as a major proponent of English exploration and colonization. He was a well-respected, or despised, man with a big reputation, even achieving a "half-garbled version of his name, 'Guatteral' . . . in both Spanish and native accounts, adding a myth-like quality to his existence."[211] His writing is precise, with the

[209] Toohey 2017.
[210] Latham 2020.
[211] Whitehead 1977, 3.

exception of dates, and he wrote in an honest and fair way, attempting to relay reality.[212] As a result, some veracity about *acephali* may nest in his accounts.

Raleigh published his book, *The Discoverie of Guiana*, in London in 1596, a year after his expedition and the same year a man who had traveled with him, Laurence Keymis, published *A Relation of the Second Voyage to Guiana*. Unlike other tales Hakluyt collected, including Keymis's account of Guiana, the editor made only marginal notations to guide the reader through *The Discoverie of Guiana*, as he believed the truth in Raleigh's words.[213] His piece proved to be not only well-written but also something to hold the interest of the English people so that they felt compelled to voyage to Guiana as well (for gold, trade, and eventually colonization).

On Thursday February 6, 1595, Raleigh departed from England to find a city of gold up the Rio Orinoco.[214] He successfully crossed the Atlantic, reached the Orinoco's mouth, and proceeded into the interior of South America. On his voyage up the river, Raleigh was told of the surrounding area, including off-shooting river branches from the Orinoco (Orenoque on Raleigh's map) such as the Caora (Fig. 11-13).[215] The natives told the explorer that there was a nation of people "whose heads appeare not above their shoulders, which though it may be thought a meere fable, yet for mine owne part I am resolved it is true."[216] Raleigh then describes how the children from the provinces of Arromata and Canuri all confirmed the existence of the *acephali*, known as

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[212] Hulme 1886, 95.
[213] Mancall 2007, 217.
[214] Raleigh 1596, 1.
[215] Raleigh 1596, 69.
[216] Raleigh 1596, 69-70.

Ewaipanoma. The people reported the Ewaipanoma as having "eyes in their shoulders, and their mouths in the middle of their breasts, and that a long train of haire groweth backward betwen their shoulders." One man whom Raleigh brought back to England further described them as mighty men who used bows and arrows and clubs three times as big as his people used; they were a common sight and have killed many hundreds in the past. Sir Walter Raleigh recounted Mandeville's description of the *acephali* and thought the people of this nation, Ewaipanoma, could be examples of the type. Afterwards, in the West Indies, Raleigh met a purportedly honest Spaniard who, once he knew the Englishmen were in Guiana, asked if they had seen any Ewaipanoma since he had witnessed many.[217]

[217] Raleigh 1596, 71.


FIG. 11. Jodocus Hondius's map (Amsterdam, 1598) of Raleigh's voyage into Guiana. Reprinted from Ruderman 2017, Stock #46151.

FIG. 12. Close up of an Ewaipanoma. Reprinted from Ruderman 2017, Stock #46151.

FIG. 13. Close up of the region with Ewaipanoma (up the Caora River). Reprinted from Ruderman 2017, Stock #46151.

Raleigh could not return to Guiana since he had been arrested and jailed in the Tower of London, so he sent a man he trusted, Laurence Keymis, to follow in his footsteps.[218] This explorer did not have Raleigh's reputation, but Raleigh presumably would not have sent him if he did not have his merits. Keymis continued into Guiana and mentions hearing about "headless men... [with] their mouthes in their breastes...exceeding wide," from his interpreter. He was also told that those called Ewaipanoma by the Guianians were called Chiparemi by the Charibes.[219] However, he doubted his second-hand accounts. Keymis believed he would not obtain more than stories since he still had not seen one, despite how much of a threat they appeared to be.[220] Keymis ultimately concluded that the Chiparemi, or Ewaipanoma, were folk monsters and not people.[221]

One Dutch account from 1625 in the West Indies eventually recorded finding an *acephali*, but the description was rather trivial.[222] They related that they saw hundreds of *acephali* busy fishing, singled out one on a pole behind a rock, reported it as strong, fat, and moving like a porpoise, observed it containing a nose, eyes a hands-width apart, ears behind the armpit, and killed it by hanging and stabbing.[223] However, this description is not like the reported Ewaipanoma in Guiana but maybe instead closer to a sea lion (there

[218] Hulme 1886, 96.
[219] Whitehead 1997, 93-4.
[220] Hulme 1886, 96.
[221] Whitehead 1997, 94.
[222] Whitehead 1997, 92.
[223] Whitehead 1997, 92-93.

is no existing species in the Caribbean, but there might have been a relative in the area at the time; the key description is the ears).[224]

The depictions of the Ewaipanoma match those of the Blemmyae, even including the hair feature seen in few accounts. The detail of eyes on shoulders is closer to the Epiphagi described by Mandeville, but the descriptions are coincidentally similar to what the English knew. Could two species with similar depictions appear in two different rainforest environments?[225] Most likely these stories of headless people were the result of errors in translation and the English imposing their ideas on garbled communications with the natives. Either way, the seafarers were prepared to believe that nature could create something unnatural or monstrous.[226]

Raleigh and a later writer, Schomburk, suggested instead of an analogous monster formation, analogous stories were carried into contemporary times.[227] The natives had various stories of monsters, and conceiving one about a headless tribe is not impossible (as mentioned in the Mandeville discussion).[228] The children from the Arromata and Canuri provinces all knew the tales, so the stories may have been bedtime fables they grew up with. However, due to translational issues, these creatures formed European congruencies, something Raleigh did not realize.

In *The Discoverie of Guiana*, Raleigh mentions how the description of the Ewaipanoma reminded him of English lore, particularly that found in Mandeville's

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[224] Hulme 1886, 97.
[225] Friedman 1981, 186.
[226] Friedman 1981, 115.
[227] Whitehead 1997, 91.
[228] Whitehead 1997, 93.

book.[229] However, the natives may have been repeating European lore they had heard, as Mandeville's work was also translated into Spanish and Dutch (languages spoken by previous travelers to the area). Raleigh suggested that the region had not lost her "maydenhead," or maidenhood, but European travelers had already made their way to the region by the time the English arrived.[230] Starting in the 16th century, Spanish missionaries devoted themselves to converting natives in the regions of Brazil and Guiana.[231] Between 1553 and 1675, nine fully functional Franciscan Provinces were established in South America. Raleigh even described a Spaniard who knew about the Ewaipanoma and the Guiana people.[232] Also, Raleigh may have heard of them first via Spanish intelligence.[233] As a result, native Guianan people may have adopted the idea, or at least the description, of the European *acephali* and passed it back to other Europeans.

Other Europeans in the Guiana area may have passed on the tale of the Blemmyae, but it could have also been a sort of self-fulfillment for the English. The natives had several monstrous types, such as one used to express alterity (otherness), displayed in ceramic representations of similar creatures like the Sciopodi (one-footed humans as described by Pliny).[234] The frequency of these ideas signifies that these vague varieties of humanity were somewhat developed in Guiana before Raleigh arrived.[235] When the Europeans appeared, they took their ideas of the Blemmyae and synthesized

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[229] Raleigh 1596, 70.
[230] Whitehead 1997, 5.
[231] Habig 2017, 72.
[232] Raleigh 1596, 71.
[233] Whitehead 1997, 42.
[234] Whitehead 1997, 93
[235] Whitehead 1997, 70-71.

them with those of the natives due to their own preconceptions and idioms and thus absorbed the native *acephali* into the European Blemmyae.[236] As with the thought process that created the fantasy of an El Dorado, there was not one type of Blemmyae but different ones depending on the region. However, after Europeans translated these different headless beings into one Blemmyae, the natives may have subsequently adopted this idea.

## Blemmyae Analysis and Conclusions

The Blemmyae could have been a deformed tribe, if the medieval logic of monstrous creation is followed, but it seems likely to have originated from people and lore. One 18th century writer, Jesuit Father Joseph-Francois Lafitau, used Iroquois legend to help create a "monogenist" theory where he described the Blemmyae in the Americas as evidence that Asia and the Americas were connected.[237] He also believed that their heads were pushed deep into the shoulders instead of being absent due to either physical accidents or impressionable expecting mothers who "imprint it upon their 'fruit.'"[238]

The Blemmyae of European lore could have been an animal or a tribe. The various records indicate that some forms of these creatures were more animalistic, such as the ones described by the Dutch or by Ingram. The *acephali* seen in Africa may have simply been an exaggeration of apes or even an analogy for a headless society.[239] Or

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[236] Whitehead 1997, 93.
[237] Delon 2001, 849.
[238] Delon 2001, 849.
[239] Burton 1872, 123.

they could have been nomadic Ethiopians, a people confirmed by historians.[240] According to Evagrius Scholasticus, Christian North African settlements were attacked by a tribe named Blemmyes in the middle of the third and fifth centuries, a piracy trait Strabo had noted. The lack of neck and face on the chest suggests that the Blemmyes used ornamented shields and/or chest armor, which, at a distance, would have given them their headless appearance. Also, Somali tribesmen "in conclave squatted behind their shields with their eyes just above the rims," a tactic that may explain how the Blemmyes were depicted.[241] Since Strabo had described the Blemmyes as pirates in Egypt, they possibly reminded the Egyptians of the "*djed* pillar erected in Egypt to honour Osiris, which has a face on its trunk."[242] Sufferers tend to view their tormentors as monsters, and the devout Egyptians surely described their attackers in a similar manner. From there, the lore of a monster morphed into Mandeville's description and beyond.

The Ewaipanoma could have either been a transferal of lore, like animals (as described), or a tribe of people who also had ornamented shields as in Africa. Raleigh explained how a man told him about the past Ewaipanoma attacks on Guiana, not unlike the ones in Egypt.[243] With this parallel in mind, perhaps there have been a tribe in South America with similarly ornamented shields, and/or method of attack, that had been demonized by their victims.

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[240] Friedman 1981, 25.
[241] Derrett 2002, 468.
[242] Derrett 2002, 468-69.
[243] Raleigh 1596, 70; Derrett 2002, 468.

By analyzing the accounts of Mandeville, Locke, Ingram, and Raleigh along with Keymis in the documentation of Blemmyae, conclusions can be made about how explorers viewed the unusual on land. Mandeville's *Travels*, despite being a questionable piece of work, defined what could be found beyond Europe to many people who only had a vague understanding of the world. Locke, a reader of Pliny, provided an understanding of educated acceptance of the unusual one could not yet disprove. Ingram supplied a more common view of sailors aboard ships as superstitious men who considered creatures such as the Blemmyae ugly beasts and as real as any animal. Raleigh and Keymis provided more skepticism to the fantastical creature but supported Locke's ideas. Raleigh's account is particularly interesting because it may indicate that Europeans may have influenced native lore and culture and would continue to do so over the years. By tracing the Blemmyes or Blemmyae, from Africa to India and Greece to England and Spain and then to the New World, the processes by which lore is created and shaped can be observed over the oceans and to new lands. If the Egyptians had never portrayed their raiders as monstrous creatures, then maybe English lore might not have had the Blemmyae portrayed in art and stories that continued to appear after Hakluyt published the second edition of *Voyages*.

# CHAPTER VI

# RELEASE THE KRAKEN

*"Let no joyful voice be heard. Let no man look up at the sky in hope. Let this day be cursed, by we who ready to wake the Leviathan." - Davy Jones,* Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest.[244]

## *Hafgufa*

During the age of exploration, new lands were not the only uncertainties that sailors had to face. Far at sea, seafarers were sure to encounter sights they could not explain. There are accounts of spectacular phenomena, such as spirits, whales as big as islands, and a harbinger to storms called St. Elmo's fire. In this chapter, a well-known deep sea fear will be analyzed as a case study: the kraken. In the process of analyzing this beast, a timeline will have to be formed in order to understand it better.

This creature has been depicted as a large squid in popular culture, as seen in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* films. However, the kraken and Davy Jones are unrelated strains of lore. Davy Jones is a kind of sea devil, possibly passed down for centuries, but the phrase "Davy Jones's Locker" dates back to around the 18th century.[245] On the seas, Jones was considered less as an individual and more as ubiquitous presence that can be

[244] Elliot and Rossio 2006, 108.
[245] Mambra 2021.

found around the world. The kraken, however, is a sea monster found in one particular location: the North Seas.

The earliest references to the kraken are from around Norway, but they are dissimilar to how they are depicted today. Stories of giant squid-like creatures and island-sized whales were recorded in European accounts since Pliny's *Natural History* but were not directly tied to the idea of the kraken until around the 11th century.[246] Before this point, it is unclear whether the kraken referred to an island fish, serpent, or giant squid, but Scandinavian voyagers may have combined a few to create the idea of the *hafgufa*.[247]

Adam of Bremen, in *Historia Norwegie*, described the first range of monsters to be found in the north: *hafkitta*, *hafstramb*, *balena*, giant walruses (like Rosmarus), and *hafguva* (or *hafgufa*).[248] The only description of *hafgufa* Bremen provided was that the creature was among the largest of marine monsters. A much clearer description can be found from around 1250 C.E. in *The King's Mirror* by Lawrence Marcellus Larson.

*The King's Mirror* was written as a dialogue between father and son about the various aspects of the world. In the section with *hafgufa*, the father discussed the various fish the son could find on the North Seas, and he mentioned, "a fish not yet mentioned, which it is scarcely advisable to speak about on account of its size which to most men will seem incredible."[249] This creature was rarely seen since it did not approach shore

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[246] Loxton 2011, 66.
[247] Loxton 2011, 67.
[248] Jorgensen 2018, 160.
[249] Larson 1917, 125.

and “has appeared more like an island than a fish.” The father figure believed there to be two in the world who bear no children since the ocean could not sustain their hunger. To eat, they supposedly belched nutrients to lure fish into their fjord-sized mouths and devour them. This idea of the *hafgufa* island fish is consistent throughout Norwegian folklore of this time.

One additional story from this era comes from the late 13th century Icelandic saga of Orvar-Oddr. In the tale, hero Oddr and his son Vignir are sailing together when they both spot strange rocks and an island.[250] Oddr orders five men ashore onto the island, but Vignir advises against it and keeps his men on the ship. After a short while, the island sinks, drowning Oddr’s men. Additionally, the rocks disappear. Confused, Oddr inquires into these mysterious formations, and Vignir gladly explains.

These mysterious rocks and island were two sea-monsters called Sea-Reek and Heather-Back. These names come from the translation, as the original titles of these creatures were *hafgufa* (sea-mist) and *lyngbakr* (heather-back) respectively.[251] According to Vignir, *hafgufa* is “the biggest monster in the whole ocean. It swallows men and ships, and whales too, and anything else around.”[252] It can stay underwater for days, and when it surfaces, it pokes up its mouth and nostrils. However, it never stays above for more than a tide. The sound that Oddr had sailed through “was the space between its jaws, and its nostrils and lower jaw were the two rocks [he] saw in the sea.”

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[250] Palsson 1986, 86.
[251] Redfern 2020.
[252] Palsson 1986, 86.

It is interesting to note that Vignir adds that he accuses their adversary, Ogmund Tussock, of using witchcraft to send *hafgufa* and *lyngbakr*, displaying magic's potential over nature. Witchcraft will be further analyzed in the following chapter.

This saga forms the foundation of tales of *hafgufa* from the 16th and 17th centuries. While this creature was largely the subject of lore from Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and other regions of the North Seas, the age of exploration helped spread these beliefs to other lands. When analyzing these two centuries, one can see the transformation of the island fish, or bizarre-looking catfish, into the beast first described as the kraken in 1755 in *The Natural History of Norway* by Erich Pontoppidan. This document, while written after the era of interest, pertains to important details about belief and accounts from the prior centuries.

The name *hafgufa* survived into at least the mid-17th century. In 1643, writer Olaus Wormius recorded that "there remains one kind, called *Hafgufe*, whose magnitude was unknown as it was rarely seen. Those who affirm they have seen its body, describe it resembling an island rather than a beast, and observe that its carcass was never found; when some imagine there are but two of the kind in nature."[253] This description directly matches the early Norwegian documents, so it can be deduced that the lore survived in this manner for hundreds of years. However, sometime before 1755, the name associated with this beast changed to kraken. This reference was not the only one to emerge from this era of an island-sized fish.

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[253] Smith 1803, 291.

It should be noted that, based on analyzing accounts of the era, there are many different creatures with a similar description. There is not one island fish but two. The same logic can be applied to polyps (many-legged creatures, not to be confused with the modern classification of larval stages of anemones, corals, and jellyfish), serpents, and giant squids. For example, in the Bahamas, there is a cryptid that is said to be a hybrid of a shark and giant octopus called the lusca.[254]

One noteworthy example of an island fish (not necessarily attributed to the kraken), by Père Fournier, describes an encounter during the reign of King Philip II in the Strait of Gibraltar.[255] It was recorded as "very different from the others, for it appeared partly above the water, having two great wings, and sailing like a ship." One vessel fired its canons at the beast, breaking a wing. It cried out and passed through the Strait of Gibraltar, finally dying ashore at Valencia in 1574.[256] It was discovered that the skull was so massive that seven men could enter it, and a man on horseback could fit into its throat.[257] Additionally, two dead men were found in its stomach. Two jaw-bones, about seventeen feet long, still rested in Escurial, Spain as of 1855. A traveler's handbook to Spain from that year describes that these are the bones of a monstrous whale with "monastic maws and powers of deglutition."[258]

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[254] Nadel 2020.
[255] Bassett 1971, 208.
[256] Ford 1855, 753.
[257] Bassett 1971, 208.
[258] Ford 1855, 753.

Before the most influential work about the kraken from this era is discussed, it is important to consider an account from 1520.[259] Erich Falkendorf, Bishop of Nidros, wrote to Pope Leo X that he had landed on one of these *hafgufas*, said mass, and witnessed it sink into the sea afterwards. This is significant because it displays that sailors, the learned, and the religious all believed that the kraken existed. It is also interesting to observe that the only people who attacked the island fish were the Europeans sailing the Strait of Gibraltar. The only measures taken against a *hafgufa* in the North Seas was to hold mass on its back.

In 1539, Swedish writer and cartographer Olaus Magnus painted a map of the North Seas called *Carta Marina*, which was decorated based on popular lore (Fig. 14).[260] These include island whales, giant whales, an Orca, Rosmarus, and an odd-looking creature that resembles a large catfish with a horned crown (Fig. 15). Magnus describes Rosmarus and the catfish (which appear to be confronting one another) as two colossal sea monsters with unusual names, and it is commonly accepted that the catfish is the kraken. Pontoppidan's description makes it clear that this creature is derived from the lore of the *hafgufa*.

[259] Bassett 1971, 209.
[260] Nigg 2013.

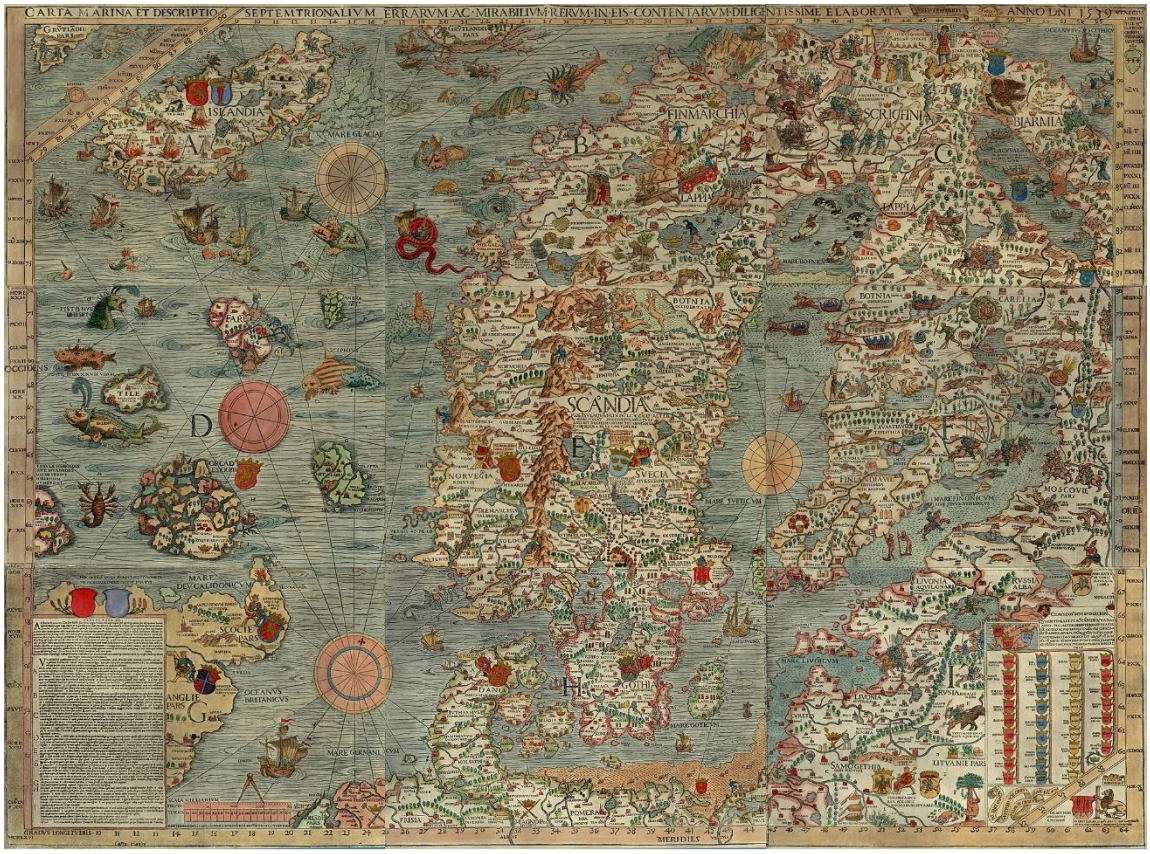

FIG. 14. *Carta Marina* by Olaus Magnus, 1539. Reprinted from Nigg 2013.

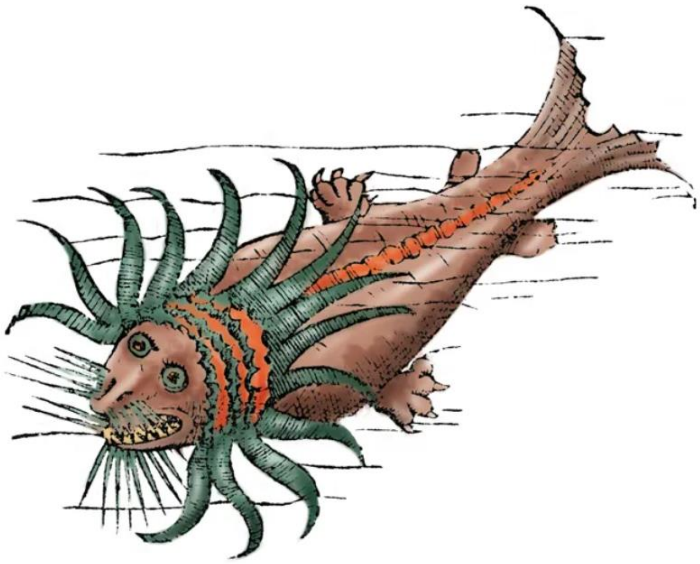
FIG. 15. The mighty kraken from the *Carta Marina*. Reprinted from James Ford Bell Library.

In 1555, two hundred years before Pontoppidan would publish his book, Olaus Magnus wrote *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus Romæ* in Latin.[261] He does not mention the *hafgufa* directly but instead describes the various groups of monsters found at sea. This includes serpents who are the length of six cubits (nine feet) and those with barbs, island-sized fish that allow fishermen to catch a plentiful supply (they attract smaller fish to eat them), and many-armed polyps.[262] The polyps are said to have suckers on their arms, can change to the color of stone, and can be perceived as fish. While these are all remarkable observations, there is no detail tied to one specific creature that makes it seem to be a *hafgufa*. Additionally, in literary documents from the period (this source included), the line is blurred between whales and monsters.[263] This illustrates the extent to which sailors feared whales, but *Historia* is not as useful when analyzing the kraken particularly. Pontoppidan's extensive description is far more valuable.

## Kraken

*The Natural History of Norway* by Bishop Erich Pontoppidan describes what was then perceived as genuine nature and includes pages of descriptions about the kraken, most of which retain the concept of the *hafgufa*. Since this account is based on conversations with correspondents and a collection of knowledge over the years, it is applicable to the 16th and 17th centuries.[264] As an author, church official, and scientist,

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[261] Magnus 1555.
[262] Magnus 1555, 732-72.
[263] Hendrikx 2018, 125.
[264] Pontoppidan 1755, 210.

Pontoppidan provides an interesting interpretation of the creature.[265] He describes the kraken as the "incontestably . . . largest sea-monster in the world," known by names such as Kraken, Kraxen, Krabben, Horven, Soe-horven, and Anker-trold.[266]

The *hafgufa* name is also attributed to the kraken. Pontoppidan says that there is a report of this beast where it resembles a wheel, "separated into rays, or a tree, with such large branches that it cannot get through a channel."[267] He describes how these details match his kraken due to the "large horns, or branches, as it were springing up from its body, which is round." Below this line is an asterisk that informs the reader how this relates to Olaus Wormius and his *Hafgufe*.

As seen in the Olaus Magnus map, more has been added to the folklore about the kraken; it had developed beyond a simple island fish. It was allegedly flat, round, full of arms or branches, and "the largest and most surprising of all the animal creation."[268] This report is also consistent with others in recounting its short time above the surface (a few minutes in this case).

Fishermen recalled their purported encounters with this creature. When they sailed several miles out to sea, especially on hot summer days, they expected to find a depth of 80 to 100 fathoms of water but instead found 20 or 30. In these locations, they found an abundance of fish and claimed this to be evidence of a kraken since they were known to cause these unnatural shallows. Additionally, these great numbers of fish were

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[265] Loxton 2011, 68.
[266] Pontoppidan 1755, 210.
[267] Pontoppidan 1755, 216.
[268] Pontoppidan 1755, 210-11.

due to the kraken's feeding habits, as described above. The fishermen also made sure to keep a close eye on the depth of the water. If it lessened, that meant the kraken would surface (though not reveal its entire body), and they were forced to sail or row to safety.

The beast, according to the fishermen, was about an English mile long and a half in circumference and at first glance appeared to be a number of small islands surrounded by seaweed.[269] Sandbanks rose with it, as fishes leapt back into the water. Then, horns appeared, "which grow thicker . . . the higher they rise above the surface of the water, and sometimes they stand up as high and as large as the masts of middle-sized vessels." The horns were said to be the arms and were capable of dragging down a man-of-war. When the creature sank back into the water, the motion caused such a swell and whirlpool that it could draw everything in the area down with it.

Based on these tales, Pontoppidan proposed that this beast was a "Polye, or of the Star-fish kind." The horns, or arms, were "properly tentacula, or feeling instruments," that were used to move themselves or "gather in their food." While the kraken is still depicted as an island fish in Pontoppidan's account, this description is significant since it was the first time tentacles were associated with the kraken. The horns or frills on the Magnus map kraken may have been tentacles; thus, this feature may have existed far before it was recorded in 1755.

One additional trait Pontoppidan describes is how the kraken eats. The belching as Pontoppidan describes it was "strong and peculiar," gaining the attention of fishes.

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[269] Pontoppidan 1755, 212.

Sometimes, instead of belching, the beast allegedly used its own excrements to draw in prey and would eat for months at a time (not over its excrement months). It used its arms to devour the fishes. When the kraken lured its prey the water around it was colored, thick, and turbid.

Pontoppidan considered these many tales, all having similar descriptions, as truth. Furthermore, he had a personal kraken experience that strengthened his belief. One Sunday, while looking out to the coastal rocks, he swore he saw lands in the sea that had not been there previously.[270] He called upon a friend to witness it, but the land had disappeared by the time this person arrived. Pontoppidan states that this "cannot possibly be any thing else but the Kraken." His belief in the kraken was so strong that when evil spirits and the devil were thought to be the cause for the appearance and disappearance of islands off the Faroe Islands, Pontoppidan thought the people were not following "the laws of truth."[271] Instead of jumping to the fantastical conclusion of devils, they should recognize that this was obviously a kraken.

In 1680, according to Pontoppidan, a "Krake (perhaps a young and careless one) came into the water that runs between the rocks and cliffs in the parish of" Alstahaug, Norway.[272] Since they typically stayed away from land, inland was only where they died or washed up. This creature's arms had gotten entangled in "some openings or clefts in the rock" and stuck. There, it died and made the channel nearly impassible due to its

[270] Pontoppidan 1755, 215.
[271] Pontoppidan 1755, 214.
[272] Pontoppidan 1755, 213.

stench. The smell carried for miles, and many government officers visited until the sea eventually washed away its remains.[273]

This account is particularly interesting because there had not been a case of an island fish reaching shore since the one in the Strait of Gibraltar (arguably not even a kraken). Despite multiple witnesses, not much documentation of the 1680 event exists. A noticeable change in lore in this story involves calling this creature a young kraken. As late as 1643, Wormius stated that there were only two in existence. However, Pontoppidan reports many instances of young krakens in his text. He even claims that they resemble "Medusa-Heads" (heads with protruding appendages).[274]

A few last points Pontoppidan makes about krakens involve their nature. Krakens do not inherently want to attack people, unlike how they are depicted in modern popular media.[275] Most, if not all, alleged kraken-related deaths were due to accidents in their wake. The only time they were known to possibly be a threat was in the saga of Orvar-Oddr since they were thought to be under the control of another. People still feared them because of their potential for enormous damage. However, they were not the only large polyp on the waters.[276] There were many like the kraken that did not quite match the description. This correlates with the statement above about how there were many different island fishes. There were several polyps, but there was only one kind of kraken.

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[273] Bassett 1971, 209.
[274] Pontoppidan 1755, 216.
[275] Pontoppidan 1755, 213.
[276] Pontoppidan 1755, 217.

These accounts Pontoppidan collected painted a picture of the kraken that he himself "believe[d] to be true and well attested."[277]

From the reports laid out by Pontoppidan, one can see the change in lore over the two centuries. The island fish from old Norse myth developed into a creature with arms by at least 1539. Pontoppidan focused on these arms extensively, leading to the belief that the kraken was indeed a giant cephalopod. One other notable creature which changed in *The Natural History of Norway* is Rosmarus (the monster confronting the kraken in *Carta Marina*) which is no longer a giant unknown beast but has been identified as a walrus (scientific name: *Odobenus rosmarus*).[278]

It would not be until 1793 that the kraken would be directly identified as something closer to a mollusk. A German encyclopedia connects the kraken and *hafgufa* under the scientific name *Microcosmus marinus*, a creature defined as part of the "*Vermes*" family (including mollusks like the nautilus) back in 1746 in *Fauna Svecica* by Carl Linnaeus.[279] The first time Linnaeus incorporated this scientific name was in the 1735 edition of *Systema Naturae*, but it was only labelled as a zoophyte (animal that resembles a plant) with other mollusks such as the cuttlefish.[280] While Linnaeus did not mention the kraken by name, just as a monster he had never seen, this connection allowed further lore to develop over the years and grow into the popular ideas of these monsters seen in films such as *Pirates of the Caribbean*.[281]

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[277] Pontoppidan 1755, 218.
[278] Pontoppidan 1755, 157.
[279] Nemnich 1793, 163.
[280] Linnaeus 1735, 11.
[281] Linnaeus 1746, 386.

Tales of ships being attacked by giant cuttlefishes, squids, or octopuses were common. Prominent examples emerged from 1802 and 1861 where, unlike the kraken stories, the crew fought the beast and escaped.[282] The reason that giant squids specifically (which were the size of a baby kraken at best) are attached to the kraken identity is because of Jules Verne. While the kraken already seemed to be a squid-snail-whale hybrid, Verne was the one who featured it in 1870 in his book *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. The author borrowed from lore about the kraken and giant squids to introduce his kraken monster towards the end of the book. This is evident in lines such as "But friend Land is no doubt mistaken, because I don't see a thing," and "a fearsome commotion out in this huge seaweed."[283] And to assure this lore stuck with the kraken, Verne directly says, "It was a squid of colossal dimensions." As a result, the kraken lore migrated around the world from the North Seas. For example, three years after the book was published, an encounter with a giant squid in Newfoundland was attributed to the kraken, even though it was only as "big as a six-gallon keg."[284]

While other regions inherited the legend of the kraken, during the 16th and 17th centuries it belonged to the North Seas (i.e. the Scandinavian counties of Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden). Everyone firmly believed that it existed and, in some cases, more so than spirits and devils. Other cultures had island fish and squids, but no one else specifically had the kraken until Verne's novel was largely distributed. It is also

[282] Loxton 2011, 69.
[283] Eidt 2020.
[284] Williams 1950, 13.

interesting to note that early people had great respect for the kraken and feared it because there was no way to combat something of such size and strength. However, it would later become a dangerous monster in popular culture. Many believe that the kraken was indeed a giant or colossal squid, but this description sounds nothing like the immense island fish of lore.[285] Additionally, everyone overlooks one important aspect of the kraken: people walked on the beast. It is physically impossible to be stable on a giant squid. Interestingly, unlike the Blemmyae, the kraken remains a cryptid that people still believe in and actively seek.

The kraken is a myth from the North Seas of Scandinavia and was first identified as *hafgufa*, the island fish. Seafarers from other parts of Europe may not have believed or even been aware of the myth. Over the 16th and 17th centuries, it was described as having arms that helped the creature to move and feed. It was not the giant squid we think of today until 1840. Since then, kraken hunters and media have shaped the *hafgufa* into the kraken. When looking back into the history of lore, many times the search was not for *The* kraken but a kraken. Science may not be able to explain these floating islands in the present, but one day, like the recently-discovered giant squid, we may find something that will crack the code of the past. One thing can be said for sure: *Hic sunt dracones.*

[285] Loxton 2011, 70-71.

# CHAPTER VII

# BLACK CATS AND CURSED COLONISTS

*"Double, double toil and trouble; fire burn and caldron bubble." – Weird Sisters,* Macbeth (4.1.10-11).

## Magic

This chapter will discuss a final subject: how explorers and sailors of the 16th and 17th centuries perceived witchcraft and magic. While derelict ships and other phenomena may appear to have fantastical elements, they are not explicitly magical in the same way as witchcraft. Since witchcraft, like sea lore, is such a broad topic with much written about it, this chapter will give an overview of the subject, focusing on sailors and explorers. First, a definition of magic and witchcraft will be provided followed by background, witch hunters, and magic in the New World.

To clarify, magic here refers to phenomena that derives from a person or persons' directional intentions. A witch can be defined as a "human being [who] can harness occult forces to serve their good or ill purposes."[286] According to Europeans during the early modern era, this power was either inborn or inherited and could be used to harm by simply a look or thought and could be performed subconsciously.[287] This person might dance with the devil at night and meet with other witches in a 'synagogue,'

[286] Scarre 1987, 1.
[287] Scarre 1987, 3.

later called a ‘sabbat’ (thus displaying the anti-Semitism of the era).[288] It should be kept in mind that these are generalizations, as witches in the Essex region of southeast England were not believed to dance with the devil, meet in sabbats, or fly.[289]

Additionally, witches were also known to throw stones at the innocent to condemn them, something derived from the Old Testament where the incriminated were stoned to death.[290] One example from the New World was on Great Island, NH (now New Castle).[291] In the summer of 1682, numerous citizens supposedly witnessed lithobolia inflicted by the stone-throwing devil. Many were accused of witchcraft, but all charges were dismissed. Events such as these in New England climaxed with the mass witch trials in Salem a decade later.

Most Europeans of the 16th and 17th centuries considered witchcraft to be devil-worship and malicious magic meant to harm others. As a result, a total of around 100,000 people (mostly women) were executed for the crime of being witches from the end of the 15th century up to the end of the 17th century.[292] The highest percentage of those convicted were on the European continent, not England.[293] The period of around 1550 to 1650 had the most intense persecutions.[294] Before then, prosecution of

[288] Scarre 1987, 18.
[289] Deacon 1976, 43.
[290] Davidson 2012, 99.
[291] Baker 2007, 1.
[292] Scarre 1987, 3.
[293] Deacon 1976, 43.
[294] Pearl 1975, 380.

witchcraft was relatively rare in Europe, mostly taking place in and around Switzerland.[295]

This diabolical idea of a witch was primarily believed by upper class and literate people while the populous accepted the idea of both harmful and helpful magic.[296] The majority understood that there were forces they did not understand that had the capacity for good and evil. Fear of witchcraft drove the learned, and this anxiety was something that transferred to the sea. It should be noted that the medieval church opposed magic it did not control, not magic altogether, something the Reformation changed.[297] Protestants strongly opposed the use of magic (except perhaps in luck or ceremonious rituals described in prior chapters). In Iceland, for example, Old Norse medical scripts (12th-15th centuries) had been utilized to create folk-medicine, but these later became documents to convict witches.[298]

Not everyone believed in the accusations of witches at the time, but those people were rare. For example, the 16th century English essayist Michel de Montaigne said that: "It is putting a very high price on one's conjectures to roast a man alive for them."[299] While a few educated men called witches and those who accused them delusional, the majority considered witchcraft a rising problem. However, historian Linda Woodbridge argues "that magic was a prevalent influence on structuring unconscious mental

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[295] Bever 2009, 263.
[296] Scarre 1987, 3.
[297] Pearl 1975, 384.
[298] Thorvardardottir 2017.
[299] Scarre 1987, 2.

processes throughout the early modern period." [300] In summary, while some were skeptical, most people believed in magic.

The idea of demonic witchcraft was encouraged by many with higher education or power, including King James VI of Scotland in 1597 when he wrote and published *Daemonologie*. King James of England's war on witches began in 1590 when he was still king of Scotland.[301] He had been in a great storm at sea that almost drowned him and was convinced it was the work of witchcraft. Francis, Earl of Bothwell, was arrested for this crime but fled. After Elizabeth I's death in England, the Scottish king became King James I and brought his war on witchcraft to England. It continued until around 1616 to 1620 when he lost interest. The hunt for witches would not spark as fiercely again until the English Civil War.[302]

This concept of witches was an inherently Christian idea. In the Christian faith, miracles (supernatural events brought on by heavenly influence) and wonders (phenomena created by demons, magicians, etc.) are distinguished from one another, meaning witches are perceived as being able to harness a power.[303] Judaism, on the other hand, believes that power derives from just the one being. So, any sailor not Christian or even religious might have been more skeptical when it came to the identification and persecution of witches.

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[300] Walters 2010, 413.
[301] Scarre 1987, 43.
[302] Scarre 1987, 59.
[303] Bever 2009, 265.

Women were primarily perceived as witches because of the contemporary belief that they were the weaker sex and were thus easily seduced by the devil.[304] Females were supposedly more prone to hysterics or to fall into fits of "hysteria."[305] This may have contributed to the folk belief that women should not be allowed aboard ships. Additionally, accusing someone of being a witch was an acceptable method for ridding themselves or the community of undesirables.[306]

One common way in England to tell if a woman was a witch was through her familiar.[307] Often either a cat or a toad, a familiar was known as an "imp or demon . . . which did their bidding in return for nourishment from a special nipple concealed on the body . . . the 'witch-mark'." The judge would search for a mole, blemish, or odd spot on the accused to declare them a witch. This reasoning was why cats were not allowed aboard English ships at the time.[308] As of 1487, Pope Innocent VIII had proclaimed them unholy, and this was an opinion that remained in England until about two centuries years later.

An example of testing for the "witch's teat" (another name for the "witch-mark") emerged on 19 April 1621.[309] In the town of Edmonton in north London, England, a woman named Elizabeth Sawyer was tried and executed for being a witch. Her neighbors refused to buy brooms from her due to their belief in witch flight. During the

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[304] Scarre 1987, 51.
[305] Spanos 1978, 425.
[306] Scarre 1987, 51.
[307] Scarre 1987, 23.
[308] "Hatch, the Mary Rose dog."
[309] Hayes 2006, 78.

trial, the townsfolk searched for a "witch-mark" since they believed a dog named Tom to be her familiar; they used what they discovered (a "private mark . . . located a little above the fundament," what they perceived to be the "witch's teat") to condemn her to death.[310]

It should be recognized that Russia may have been an exception to these European practices, as the ideas of demonic magic and pacts was unknown to them.[311] So, there were few witch trials in Russia, and most of the accused were men. This differentiation is largely due to questions of legal terminology, which members of the population were accessible to the law, and who was involved in magic.[312] Additionally, neither the Renaissance nor the Reformation reached Russia.[313] Therefore, Russian (and other nations not affected by the Renaissance and Reformation) sailors might have been more hesitant to accuse someone of witchcraft.

By around 1700, the persecution finally ceased, but the period left a stain on human history.[314] In an attempt to eradicate Europe of undesirables, anti-witch zealots killed thousands. Additionally, they labeled all whom they considered pagans as devil-worshippers and servants of evil (a misunderstanding many still have today).[315] To fully understand the craze, it is important to mention the book that fueled it: the *Malleus Maleficarum*.

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[310] Hayes 2006, 79.
[311] Ryan 1998, 49.
[312] Ryan 1998, 83.
[313] Ryan 1998, 84.
[314] Pearl 1975, 380.
[315] Pearl 1975, 386.

## The *Malleus Maleficarum*

The *Malleus Maleficarum* was published during the late 15th century, but its influence was monumental over the next two centuries. On 29 October 1485, a German woman named Helena Scheuberin was placed on trial for having questionable morals, being sexually promiscuous, and possessing "maleficent magical power."[316] In the eyes of the inquisitor, Henry Institoris, she was a witch, but the lawyer questioned the trial's validity and had the accused dismissed.[317] In response, Institoris retired to Cologne and wrote a full defense of his beliefs, the *Malleus Maleficarum*, or the "Hammer of Witches."

This text outlined how to identify witches and manage their trials. The book defined witches for the first time (*maleficarum*). Before, they had been called either heretics, "monstrous female spirits," or *maleficium*, but no one term and definition was decided. This source provided the guide to defining witches. It also explained the existence of witches and their abilities as agents of diabolical power.[318] Rumor, legend, and hearsay played an important part in the trials highlighted by this book. Within fifty years this document heavily influenced efforts to identify and prosecute witches.[319]

The book starts by addressing innocent bishops and servants of G-d ("*errus seruorum dei"*), as Institoris desired only to address those who he deemed allies of his

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[316] Broedel 2003, 1.
[317] Broedel 2003, 2-3.
[318] Broedel 2003, 4-5.
[319] Broedel 2003, 7.

crusade.[320] He explores different topics by the use of questions and answers and starts the book by stating that the Catholic church had different values than those of "*hereticum.*"[321] He does his best to separate and condemn those whom he considered witches in this manner. One passage explains the reasoning behind devils infecting witches. Apparently, "[Demons] cannot truly talk in their own right, but . . . [use] sounds with a certainty similarity to vocal expressions." For this reason, they were believed to work, or speak, through witches.[322]

By 1500, eight editions of the *Malleus* had been published, and there were five more by 1520. By the time Institoris died in 1505, his work had spread to libraries across Europe, especially in Germany. The *Malleus* became a guidebook for finding witches and was accepted as truth in trials. Between 1576 and 1670, 16 new editions were produced, and between 30,000 and 50,000 copies were distributed to the Rhineland, Frankfurt, Venice, Lyon, Nuremburg, and Paris.[323] As a result of this widespread and accepted concept of a witch, no one like Scheuberin would be dismissed again until around 1700.

## Witch Hunters

During this 200 year craze, witch hunters emerged and took the *Malleus* to heart. Due to the nature of human panic, witch hunters and their victims are practically

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[320] Mackay 2006, 199.
[321] Mackay 2006, 217.
[322] Mackay 2006, 26.
[323] Broedel 2003, 8.

inseparable. By definition, witch hunters were "men who did not merely carry out their duty in trials, but who went out of their way to orchestrate and promote them."[324] They were likely to be found working at a local level since national officials had more substantive problems to worry about. However, in the case of Scotland, witch hunting was centrally supervised.[325] Witch hunters could also travel a great distance to carry out their missions. For example, John Cunningham, "the seafaring son of a Fife laird" of Scotland, voyaged to Denmark and Greenland as captain in the early 17th century.[326] In 1619, Cunningham was appointed governor of Finnmark, Norway and began his own witch hunts. Clearly, some sailors also served as witch hunters.

European witch hunters appeared with the Reformation in the early 16th century and disappeared around the 18th century. These hunters tortured the accused for confessions and murdered a great number of innocent people. However, none were as influential as Matthew Hopkins.

Little is known about Hopkins before 1644, but a great deal of evidence of his presence exists between 1645 to 12 August 1647 when he was buried at Mistley.[327] He appeared at a time when the English Civil War and its attendant lapse in normal judicial procedures caused political and societal unrest.[328]

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[324] Goodare 2013, 3.
[325] Goodare 2013, 2.
[326] Goodare 2013, 3.
[327] Deacon 1976, 12.
[328] Oldridge 2016, 142.

Hopkins was the son of James Hopkins, Puritan minister of Wenham, and was believed to be native to Manningtree in Essex.[329] He was most likely inspired to become a witch hunter during his education and residence in Holland.[330] He may be the most infamous witch hunter of his time because of how many of them he murdered. Hopkins declared himself to be divinely appointed to lead a crusade against witches as a Witchfinder General.[331] However, this was likely a ruse to gain money and power. The starting rate of remuneration for finding and accusing a victim was twenty shillings per witch, a hefty sum for the time.

In 1645, Hopkins convicted sixteen people of "entertaining evil spirits" while seven of them were blamed for the death of other people or animals.[332] By the end of the year, five were hanged, a slow beginning for Hopkins.[333] Over the next two years, he would go on to accuse and execute roughly 300 people.[334] In 1647, he wrote *The Discovery of Witches*, a question-and-answer style guidebook to witches for witch hunters.[335] On the cover is the Exodus quote from the King James bible, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." The book emphasizes women as witches (including accusing them if they do not like being called a "whore") as well as the use of familiars in identifying a witch.[336] Hopkins described his job almost as a charity for the towns he

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[329] Deacon 1976, 12.
[330] Deacon 1976, 18.
[331] Deacon 1976, 72.
[332] Deacon 1976, 68.
[333] Deacon 1976, 76.
[334] Deacon 1976, 115.
[335] Hopkins 1647, 1.
[336] Hopkins 2, 1647.

served.[337] As for the matter of proclaiming a witch, he had this to say about witch hunters: “He is a man that doth disclaime that ever he detected a witch, or said, Thou art a witch; only after her tryall by search, and their owne confessions, he as others may judge.” In other words, the book claims Hopkins believed in an unbiased system. However, history portrays him as searching the countryside for witches, an inherent conflict with his stated values.

Soon after publishing his book, Hopkins met his demise, supposedly being accused as a witch by a mob and killed.[338] It was a fitting death. The legacy he left confirmed the fears of many about witches until their reasoning switched to one more of science.[339] However, one should not assume that the scientific revolution was some great awakening where people suddenly did not believe in fantastical entities. Instead, there was a gradual change to more scientific approaches to existing beliefs. While the populous became were more skeptical of spectral attacks and flimsy evidence, people still believed in tremendous beings that could be proven with physical evidence. So, while magical evidence was on the decline, it was replaced by the rise of vampires (made apparent by bloodless bodies or corpses in pristine condition after a prolonged time underground).[340]

These practices of witchcraft accusations were carried into the colonies of New England, displaying similarities to cases in East Anglia from 1645-47.[341] Thus, the witch

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[337] Hopkins 10, 1647.
[338] Deacon 1976, 194.
[339] Oldridge 2016, 143.
[340] Klaniczay 2002, 387.
[341] Deacon 1976, 198.

trials around Salem, Massachusetts may have derived from the exploits of Matthew Hopkins. In 1692, nineteen were hanged, one was pressed to death, and eight more were condemned. Additionally, fifty confessed and were pardoned, about 150 were imprisoned, and over 200 accused fled for their lives. This will be discussed further in the Salem discussion.

## Shakespeare and Magic

To better understand the mindset of common folk in Renaissance England, one can turn to William Shakespeare, specifically his plays *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*. The play best known for its depiction of witches is *Macbeth* with its Weird Sisters (main appearance in Act 1, Scene 3 and Act 4, Scene 1). The story tells of the rise and fall of the title character who becomes a Scottish King (a possible insult towards King James I). The play opens cryptically with the three sisters who introduce the play and foreshadow coming events in saying, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair."[342] They serve a purpose in the play like the ghost of Hamlet's father. While the senior Hamlet can be viewed as either a demonic tempter or angelic messenger, the witches were certainly not depicted as angelic. They tell the future of Macbeth and Banquo, which could either be viewed as an accurate reading or a curse.

The witches in the play display immense power. Thunder and lightning flash when they chant incantations and futures, and they have control over the sea and land.[343]

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[342] Shakespeare 2012, 1.1.11.
[343] Shakespeare 2012, 1.3.7-13.

They conduct rituals over a cauldron and kill animals to throw into the pot such as an "eye of newt, and toe of frog."[344] This detail is particularly interesting since Elizabethans believed that witches could perform magic without the need of ritual.[345] Maybe this was Shakespeare's depiction of a Sabbat, or perhaps, even though witches allegedly needed no more than a malicious glare, they could still make concoctions in cauldrons. Or perchance the pot was merely a plot device to tell the audience that these were witches.

There is also mention of the sisters harnessing helpful magic, evident by people coming to them for supernatural intervention. One example is a wife asking for her husband's safe return from sea, so the witches control the winds to carry out the deed. However, they are depicted as devilish since they still make the husband suffer: "Though his bark cannot be lost, yet it shall be tempest-tost."

*The Tempest*, believed to be inspired by the real wreck of *Sea Venture* in 1609, was first produced in 1611 and provided another view of a magical character.[346] This play follows the sorcerer Prospero and his struggle to forgive those who betrayed him. It was novel to have a mystical lead character with a sympathetic resolution at a time when magic was deemed evil, but it further emphasizes the point that the public did not view all magic as dubious. Prospero may have been a relatable character since he is a sorcerer, not a witch. The difference is that sorcery, unlike witchcraft, required incantations, rituals, and books to perform magic.[347] Here, the island and sprites emanate natural

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[344] Shakespeare 2012, 4.1.14.
[345] Scarre 1987, 3.
[346] Kositsky 2007, 447.
[347] Scarre 1987, 3.

power in the play. However, since the tale of *Sea Venture* involved witches and an end to pre-existing Bermuda lore, there may be some evidence that *The Tempest* was not inspired by the wreck.

## Bermuda

These tales of witchcraft and magic spread beyond Europe and affected people in the New World including sailors, explorers, and colonists. Case study examples that will be examined are Bermuda, Popham, Salem, and the voyage of *Golden Hinde*.

In 1609, a fleet of ships was sent from England to Jamestown, Virginia to save the colony.[348] Among the squadron was *Sea* Venture, a three-hundred ton vessel carrying 150 passengers, which included soldiers, fishmongers, tailors, grocers, farmers, families, a dozen gentlemen, and an Anglican minister, Reverend Richard Buck.[349] The master of the ship was Captain Christopher Newport, a one-handed former privateer.[350] Additionally, Sir George Somers was on board; he was also a former privateer but now was the admiral of the outbound fleet and was to serve as Vice Admiral of the Virginia colony's "fleet of trading and fishing vessels." The last important superior aboard *Sea Venture* was Sir Thomas Gates, the next appointed governor of Virginia.[351]

Six days after losing sight of land, the leaders of the fleet convened to make an unfortunate decision.[352] They decided to take a more northerly route to avoid the Spanish

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[348] Glover 2008, 1.
[349] Glover 2008, 2.
[350] Mardis 1981, 1.
[351] Glover 2008, 1.
[352] Mardis 1981, 1.

in the West Indies and preserve water reserves. About a week away from Virginia, disaster struck. A furious tempest hit, separated *Sea Venture* from the other vessels, and caused the ship to take on water.[353] This "hurricano" resulted in the sinking of *Sea Venture*, but the crew managed to keep her afloat until they spotted land three days later.

The crew of *Sea Venture* was saved on 18 July 1609 by Bermuda, known to them as "the Ile of devils, that all men did shun as Hell and perdition."[354] Somers and Newport, based on their positioning, knew this to be "that dreadful coast of the Bermodes," which was considered to be "inchanted and inhabited with witches and devils." The reputation of this place made Somers, Newport, and Gates discuss whether to even land, which is congruent with learned individuals fearing malicious magic. We are told that even the sailors and passengers were terrified. They believed Bermuda to be "an inchanted den of Furies and Devils, the most dangerous, unfortunate, and forlorne place in the world."[355] They also told of evil spirits which resided on the island and its waters, sinking ships and dooming sailors. The area was "so fearful, hideous, and hateful as it seemed a place abandoned of G-d and man, and given up to the devil's power and possession, and to be of all known places in the world a very hell upon earth."[356]

After a discussion, Somers, Newport, and Gates chose between their fear of magic and fear of death and decided to brave the islands of Bermuda. They chose wisely, as they did not realize that this island chain's lore stemmed from weird sounds emanated

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[353] Glover 2008, 2-3.
[354] Glover 2008, 125.
[355] Glover 2008, 126-27.
[356] Glover 2008, 126-27.

from its birds and its ship-killing coral reefs. When they ran their ship on a reef, it lodged between the coral heads, allowing everyone to safely escape.[357] This was seen as a miracle and "G-d's divine providence." As a result, after salvaging all they could from the wreck, Reverend Buck led a prayer to "humbly thank G-d for his great mercy, in so preserving them from destruction."[358]

During the first night ashore, and many to come, night watches were stationed, even though they knew the islands to be uninhabited.[359] The archipelago had been known for about a century as a place of evil magic, and the castaways were not taking any chances. Over time, however, they were seduced by the islands. They had feared the devil but found an Eden. These colonists were stranded for over a year while they built two pinnaces to escape to Jamestown.

As England expanded its transoceanic colonization and trade, fears increased about ships being lost to evil magic and people who associated with the devil. The English believed that without laws, order, and religious instruction, people regressed to a wicked nature, thus forcing Gates and the others to strive towards a continued civilizational organization.[360] However, the crew never found devils in Bermuda. Instead, they discovered a steady supply of meat from feral pigs and supplies as well as comfortable year-round weather.[361] This paradise was a stark contrast to what awaited them in Jamestown. Various colonists mutinied several times just to stay in this Eden.

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[357] Glover 2008, 128.
[358] Glover 2008, 130-31.
[359] Glover 2008, 132-33.
[360] Glover 2008, 131.
[361] Glover 2008, 136.

Somers was so entranced with the place that when he arrived back in England he helped found the Somers Isles Company to colonize it. Gates and others, upon returning to England, used their story of survival to enforce the idea that G-d wanted them to occupy the New World and stamp out the devil.[362] Further propaganda was utilized, claiming that opponents of the Virginia Company were in league with the devil.

The tale of *Sea Venture* is particularly notable because it describes how strongly the early explorers believed in witchcraft in association with dangerous areas and also provides an end to pre-existing lore (the English no longer believed witches to inhabit Bermuda). This location was feared for about a century, and after a single trip, it became a destination location. The story also highlights the reason why English explorers feared islands such as these: the unknown was inherently frightening. This point emphasizes the xenophobia that also inspired witch hunts.

Bermuda was not the only island that held mythical implications for sailors from lore. Thule/Tile, seen on *Carta Marina* from the kraken chapter, is a mythical island known to be the northernmost part of the ancient world.[363] Another example is Demonland, discussed below.[364] While there were no witches in Bermuda, many colonists believed maleficent magic was present in the colonies.

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[362] Glover 2008, 222.
[363] Kavenna 2015.
[364] See below, 110-111.

## Popham

About a month after Jamestown began in Virginia, another colony was formed in Maine in the autumn of 1607 and lasted for only one year.[365] This was the English settlement of Sagadahoc, also known as the Popham Colony, on the Kennebec River. It was led by two men: George Popham and Raleigh Gilbert. The colony was mostly comprised of elites and higher class, and after the first brutal winter most of them strongly opposed staying in the settlement a second year. Popham died amid the cold, and Gilbert returned to England to inherit his family's estate. The colony's failure stemmed from lack of strong leadership and financing, lazy colonists, bad preparation, and poor relations with the native Etchemin people. While positive interactions with Native Americans benefitted other colonies, this one had an uneven relationship due to Popham and Gilbert's two very different approaches.

Popham saw the benefit in befriending the natives while Gilbert strongly opposed it, despite their intent to trade with the locals. Gilbert went so far as to contact friends in England to sail to the colony and displace Popham.[366] So, when Popham died during the winter of 1607-8, the relations with the Etchemins failed.

In 1616, French Jesuit Pierre Biard wrote about his contact with the Etchemins during French exploration of the area in October and November 1611.[367] From what they

[365] Bilodeau 2014, 1.
[366] Bilodeau 2014, 25.
[367] Bilodeau 2014, 30-31.

discussed, Biard was able to locate the former colony. He was also told of Popham, “a very honest man” who was able to hold good relations. However, according to Biard, the Almouchiquois people to the west distrusted the newcomers. In response, due to a growing an alliance with the Etchemins, they were said to have sabotaged the settlement and killed Popham. With Gilbert in charge, the Etchemins strongly opposed the English, leading to the inevitable downfall of the colony. The Almouchiquois, according to Biard, disrupted them by using not physical means but metaphysical. He reported that these people “make a practice of killing by magic.”

This mention of magic, while secondhand from a Frenchman who asked about the colony, relates to other settlements as well (including those of the French explorers). Bermuda is a prime example of a magical island whereas Popham is an early example of Europeans viewing the Americas as a land with magical people. The concept of magical natives accorded with contemporary ideas of witchcraft and the belief that any pagan faith worshiped the devil. Instead of focusing on the magical users within the European society, this example emphasizes the Other (a philosophical postulation highlighting differences between the main beliefs of a person, or collective, and others). However, there are instances of people in the New World searching for witches among their own colony. One famous case from less than one century later took place in the settlement of Salem.

## Salem

While most of Europe started to shift toward enlightenment and the scientific revolution, the English colonies in North America were slower to catch up. In mid-January of 1691/2 (the English new year changed on 25 March during this time), two girls living in Reverend Samuel Parris's house in Salem Village (now Danvers), Massachusetts, fell into fits that people attributed to witchcraft.[368] In the following months, many more claimed to be tortured by witches or tormented by ghosts. This initiated a witch hunt that lasted until the late May of 1693. It led to many deaths, most of which occurred in jail. The most active accusers were a group of young women (ages 11 to 20) from Andover and Salem Village, the perfect target demographic for devils according to English Puritans of the time.[369] As a result of their low status in society, these women may have reveled in their new power.

The curious case of Salem, while incorporating similar aspects of other witch accusation events, does contain notable differences from others in New England. The number of accusers and those being convicted were much larger than in other communities in the region. For example, one incident in Hartford, Connecticut in the early 1660s involved eleven accused.[370] Additionally, the Salem-area crisis took place after the major craze in England and Scotland (1550-1650) but reached similar numbers of convictions. Another distinction of this event is how vast of an area it encompassed. Most crises incorporated an adjacent town or two, but this one involved 22 different

[368] Norton 2003, 3.
[369] Norton 2003, 4.
[370] Norton 2003, 8.

locations (15 in the Essex County region). More than 40 of the accused lived in Andover, MA. The trials took place in Salem Town, but dubbing this the Essex County witch crisis may have been more accurate. Other major distinctions include the accusers being women (unlike Matthew Hopkins and other male witch hunters in England) and the allegations involving torture and spectral temptation instead of being defined as "maleficium" (harmful magic as conducted by witches). Checks and balances were instated into the judicial system in order to protect someone from these ludicrous claims.[371] However, the Court of Oyer and Terminer judicially failed and condemned many.

People searched for enemies among their neighbors, but the social selection of accusers and victims stems further back. Salem Village was the first permanent settlement of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, founded in 1626 around Cape Ann.[372] In the 1660s and 70s, New England outposts were prosperous resources for England.[373] Settlers farmed, fished, traded furs, operated sawmills, and existed peacefully next to the Wabanaki people. Then, from 1675-78, King Philip's War broke out, followed by the First and Second Indian Wars, which started in what is today the state of Maine in the summer of 1688 and lasted until around 1699. By 1690, the English colonists had largely abandoned the northern frontier. It took two decades for the Maine region to be fully resettled. As a result, many refugees from the north were in Salem in 1692.[374] Many who

[371] Norton 2003, 10.
[372] Norton 2003, 16.
[373] Norton 2003, 11.
[374] Norton 2003, 12.

accused or confessed were also from Maine. This unrest perfectly set the stage for the next few years of witch trials.

In November 1691, Samuel Parris preached that there was a sharp disconnect between church members and everyone else, and if they did not join, they invited the devil.[375] This led into the first fits in the colony. In response, counter-magic was utilized, and the "Indian slave couple, Tituba and John," were instructed by Parris's neighbor Mary Sibley to make a witch cake.[376] This was a concoction made of rye meal and children's urine, baked in ashes, and fed to the family dog and was supposed to identify the witch. The afflicted cried out that it was Tituba, but luckily for her these accusations were not taken seriously until older girls joined the ruse. It should be recognized that, as seen here, those in Salem believed in hurtful and helpful native magic. While other witch hunts were built on fears, religious crusades, or greed, this one seems to combine many societal issues into one event. The accused were previously inculpated of witchcraft or the target of a personal feud between households.

The Salem scare was an anomaly for its late occurrence in the 17th century. Salem was very much a maritime community, but the involvement of its seafarers seemed to have been limited. Whether that was due to the transience of mariners or their exposure to the wider world, witch hunts and trials at sea were not common events; although, as we will see in the next section, they did happen.

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[375] Norton 2003, 18.
[376] Norton 2003, 20.

## Straits of Magellan

Due to internal religious conflicts, the English were late to begin their colonization efforts as well as to circumnavigate the world. In late 1577, Francis Drake, the admiral of a fleet of five ships, set out to attempt the latter, a feat that had been first accomplished when Portuguese sailor Ferdinand Magellan sailed for the Spanish in 1519.[377] Cape Horn was not yet known to the explorers, so Drake intended for his crew to travel down the coast of South America and through the Straits of Magellan to reach the South Seas and beyond. Only Drake's ship *Golden Hinde* would make it all the way around. The expedition ran into several set-backs, storms, and possibly one act of treason by a man named Thomas Doughty in July 1578. Doughty has subsequently been the focus of much controversy, as many perceive his execution to be merely a means to make Drake's crew fear and obey him.

After friction grew between the aristocratic Doughty and Drake, the former was placed on trial for supposedly planning a mutiny against the admiral (possibly since before the fleet left England). A communication was brought into question between Doughty and the Master aboard the ship *Swan,* Sarocold.[378] Doughty had allegedly relayed that "he had been sent there as a prisoner suspected of being a traitor to the general Drake and a conjuror, or in other words of practicing the Black Art."

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[377] Fletcher 1652, 6-7.
[378] Corbett 1899, 226.

Additionally, it was claimed that "he and his brother could conjure as well as any man, and that they could raise the devil and make him meet any man in the likeness of a bear, a lion or a man in harness . . . [and] could poison as well as any man."[379] While it is difficult to know how big of an impact this claim had on the outcome of the trial, it is important to note that it was brought to the judge's attention as evidence.

These beliefs coincide with what has previously been discussed in Renaissance Europe. The upper class believed that witches were bent on destroying them. Magic, as seen in *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*, involved controlling the weather and poisoning. Indeed, the concepts of a witch described were peculiarly English with mention of familiars and a devil in animal form. This was not the last mention of magic aboard *Golden Hinde*, as the English performed some of their own in the renaming ceremony.[380]

They also encountered Demonland. After passing through the Straits of Magellan, they were greeted with terrible storms. The remaining fleet was forced southwards by the continuous tempests and reached the vicinity of Antarctica by 6 April 1578.[381] They spotted a land that may have caused Drake to believe their torment was the result of magic. According to the pilot, this area was called *Terra Demonum*, or Demonland, a place Portuguese sailors had declared enchanted. The pilot explained to Drake how the land was inhabited with natives who had fled from the cruelty of "the white men" and sold themselves to the devil "as the gentler masters." He further relayed

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[379] Brooks 1946, 190.
[380] See above, 10-11.
[381] Corbett 1899, 227.

how what may now be perceived as natural phenomena were than interpreted as supernatural events:

> "And now, when they see any ships upon their coasts, the shore being sandy, they cast the sand up into the air, whereof ariseth suddenly such a haziness, as a most gross and thick fog, that there followeth a palpable darkness, that the land cannot be seen, no, nor the Heavens. Besides this, they increased the shoals in the way of the ships in the seas to ground them. And, withall such horrible, fearful, and intolerable winds, rains and storms, that there is no certainty of life one moment of time . . . By these means, did they continually overthrow the Portugals."[382]

There are certainly interesting comparisons to make between this occurrence and the one at Bermuda. Both areas were feared as unknown shores, and the sailors in the accounts described their features as the result of an evil, magical force. In this tale, however, the pilot is more fearful of the magic than the more knowledgeable Drake. This island's magic stemmed from its native populations while Bermuda's magic derived from the island itself and the devils dwelling upon and around it.

## Conclusions Regarding Magic

Based around the ideas found in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, belief in witches and magic ran strong in the 16th and 17th centuries in parts of Europe and in European

[382] Corbett 1899, 228.

overseas colonies. Interest in witch hunts spiked in England around the reign of King James I and the English Civil War. The fear of witches was stoked by the activities of witch hunters such as Matthew Hopkins. This scare carried across to the New World, which continued to see outbreaks of anti-witched fervor until around the start of the 1700s.

Hidden within the context of these hunts are xenophobic and well as misogynistic tendencies. Until the late 20th century, many historians ignored the sexist gender issue brought up by witch hunts, saying women imagined doing witchcraft as a form of hysteria.[383] However, this thinking is exactly the reason there were trials in the first place. The patriarchal community associated women with weakness, so they assumed women could be targeted by demons. Additionally, conservative men of the time were searching for a world full of their "good woman" archetype.[384] If one was not of their society and sharing common beliefs, then they were in league with the devil. This line of thinking led to many deaths.

The fear of witchcraft and magic appears to stem from the fear of the Other and the unknown, something that easily transferred to mariners on their voyages. The mindset during the age of exploration, as viewed with the belief of the Blemmyae, was that because the world was so vast with so many different and strange creatures, anything was possible.[385] The Christian beliefs held by most Europeans were open to the

[383] Whitney 1995, 79.
[384] Whitney 1995, 77.
[385] Walters 2010, 426.

concept of the devil and his retinue of disciples. Non-Christian cultures were presumed to be devil-worshippers, and thus we find accounts of devils and witches in the New World. The fear of not knowing the conditions of certain reefs or weather conditions along any given coast explains the English fearful perceptions of places Bermuda and Antarctica. The fear of the Other is evident in the accounts of the Popham Colony and the Salem scare.

It is likely that many seafarers of the time shared widespread beliefs in witchcraft and magic. The Christian faith, which was present in European seafarers, made it possible to accept that there were devils in other lands who were bent on sabotaging them. While seafarers may have believed in magic, they would not all have agreed about devils and witches, and some mariners likely accepted that supernatural abilities could be used for good and bad, for sailors had their own rituals to promote safety and good fortune aboard ships. Tokens and idiosyncratic behaviors meant to grant luck can be considered their own forms of magic. The sea was full of uncertainties, and this folklore was meant to provide comfort and answers to unfathomable mysteries.

Captains, admirals, and other higher-ranking, and presumably more learned, men aboard a vessel could believe in magic too but usually trusted that it would mainly serve to destroy. In the case of John Cunningham, some took matters into their own hands. This may derive from a paranoia that if one had power, someone wanted to take it away.

From England to the New World, the idea of magic was prevalent throughout the 16$^{th}$ and 17$^{th}$ centuries. Witches and sorcerers were even depicted in plays by Shakespeare. Women were the main targets, accused in England largely through the

claim of familiars. Bermuda was feared as an “Ile of Devils,” which came from the uncharted, hazardous coastline and odd-sounding birds. The Popham Colony suffered a large failure, which a French source believed to be the work of “Indian magic” (i.e. the Other). Salem incorporated a mix of fear of devils and attacks, through the perceived “weak” woman, and political disputes. Francis Drake allegedly encountered some devils of his own, found in the accusation of witchcraft against Thomas Doughty and *Terra Demonum* (either an example of a hazardous coast and/or “Indian magic”).

# CHAPTER VIII

# CONCLUSIONS

*"The isle is full of noises, sweet sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not."* – *Caliban,* The Tempest (3.2.136-137).

Sailors of the 16th and 17th centuries have been considered superstitious and for good reason. Many of them believed in magic and fantastical forms of creatures in new lands and at home. This was the era of exploration and colonization. They could not dismiss anything they came across because their lack of geographical and biological knowledge meant that anything was possible. Headless human-like beasts with faces on their chests may seem preposterous today, but at the time, they were just as plausible as an egg-laying mammal with webbed feet and a duck bill (the platypus). No one can fault them for this logic because modern science was born from these discoveries. When a more precise, scientific approach to the world, and to thinking, began to be implemented during the 1700s, this resulted in the classification schemes of modern geology and biology. An example of this is with the beast Rosmarus, later classified as a walrus with the fantastical name incorporated into its scientific one.[386]

Many of the sailors' charms and idiosyncrasies of luck came from practicality and maintaining some sort of certainty on an ever-changing sea. Bananas exemplify bad

[386] Pontoppidan 1755, 157.

luck stemming from either apophenia (perceived meaningful connections between unrelated things) or observations of the negative outcomes of those ships with bananas on board. The belief about women on board a vessel originates from ancient Greece and continued on due to the witch scare. Some accepted ideas on the sea came from observations while others were mannerisms from folklore that made the individual feel more secure. Animals could be seen as either good signs or harbingers of evil. Even parts of the human body were carried for luck, such as the caul. Finally, the name of the ship was its identity, and to change it safely, certain rituals had to be conducted.

The ship was responsible for the well-being of its crew, so it was treated as if it was a sentient being. This led to the creation of eyes at the bow and figureheads that were meant to represent the ship's identity. Having this reliable figure, the one responsible for the fate of those on board, by the sailors' sides added a sense of security in the unknown.

Ghosts could either bring harm or help to a ship, but a derelict ship was usually a harbinger of death and loss. The Flying Dutchman was the worst vision to see on the ocean. Popular lore held that this ship was lost around Cape Horn in the 17$^{th}$ century, supposedly as it sailed under a Captain Vanderdecken who pressed on through a horrible storm and vowed to beat it until the day of judgement. After its initial popularity among mariners, the story became mainstream and spread around the world. Soon, everyone was sighting a version of a Flying Dutchman.

Exploration into the New World also mean carrying forward old stories to apply to new circumstances. Due to ancient Greek encounters with Egypt, medieval Europeans

adopted the idea of a creature with no head and a face on its chest; indeed, it became a common motif in medieval English art and lore. English mariners would then bring tales of Blemmyae to the Americas, based on the descriptions by Sir John Mandeville. Blemmyae cameos do appear in popular culture, but they are perhaps not as celebrated as other creatures found in exploration.

Terrors of the deep were equally as accepted as fantastical formations found on foreign shores. Sailors did not know nearly as much about the ocean or shores as they do now and believed creatures could be responsible for hardships. One of these beasts was the *hafgufa*, an island fish who would later be known as the kraken. This monstrosity was respected and feared by seafarers crossing northern seas, but in its early form it was benign unless approached too closely.

Witchcraft and magic is an interesting topic due to surviving misconceptions of witchcraft as devil worship. As a result of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, King James I, Matthew Hopkins, and the English Civil War, the 16th and 17th centuries were an age of witch hysteria. More women than men died, furthering the idea that this was largely a misogynistic event to further the archetype of the "good woman." This xenophobic solution to rid communities of undesirable citizens ended with the coming Age of Enlightenment. This fear continued into the New World as seen in Bermuda, Popham, Salem, and the Straits of Magellan, among other places. Unfortunately, a form of witch hunts continues today, and people still believe that those who practice folk magic, witchcraft, or Voodoo worship the devil.

The general trend of these various overarching topics of sea folklore are apparent. First, ancient Greek lore and observations greatly influenced European beliefs and views during the period of interest. Most seafarers believed in luck, and many still do, much like the rest of society in one form or another. Additionally, they all thought, and still think, of ships as being a living entity. Ghosts and ghost ships were also continuously believed to be real, but this was the first subject discussed where the larger public had a major impact. The 17th century was a time that depended heavily on oral tradition, with folk stories more likely to be written down in the 18th century and later. The 19th century saw a sort of artistic revolution that adapted the Flying Dutchman to the ideas of the creator. The same goes for the kraken. This mythical super-sea-monster was recorded prior to Renaissance-era accounts, but the word "kraken" did not appear until the 18th century. And in the 19th century, the lore had spread globally and changed in various artistic works. The Blemmyae, however, did not inspire as many 19th century artists, despite being a popular mythical creature in earlier centuries. Magic was commonly accepted before and during the 16th and 17th centuries when the Reformation outlawed its practice. Today, many think magic is the subject of pure myth, not realizing they use it for prayer and luck (such as charms and birthday wishes).

This thesis strives to give an overview of sea lore and not to be an exhaustive source. Even Bassett's 491-page book that simply states different stories, without diving into them, does not come close to scratching the surface of this topic. Many accounts were not included in this analysis. Further research that can be conducted includes, but is not limited to, different case studies to compare various subjects under an overarching

topic. For example, how does the belief in mermaids compare to the Blemmyae for onshore creatures? What did the first accounts of Davy Jones describe, and how do they compare? How do different animals appear in lore across the world? There is so much to be tackled that it could not be accomplish in one thesis. However, this thesis introduces the world of sea lore and will hopefully become a jumping off point for more research.

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APPENDIX A

FIFTEEN MEN ON A DEAD MAN'S CHEST: RECREATING THE MYTHICAL FLYING DUTCHMAN

| Classification | Name | Length (Am ft) | Convert (m) | Wide (Palms) | Top Long (Am ft & ells) | Thickness | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Masts** | Main | 80 | 22.65 | 18 | 7 | - | |
| | Fore | 70 | 19.82 | 16 | 6.5 | - | |
| | Mizzen | 60 | 16.99 | 11.5 | 11.5 | - | |
| | Bowsprit | 60 | 16.99 | 18 | - | - | |
| | Main Top | 51 | 14.44 | 11.5 | 4.5 (1.27m) | - | |
| | Fore Top | 41 | 11.61 | 9.5 | 3.5 (1m) | - | |
| | Main Topgallant | 22 | 6.23 | 4.5 | - | - | |
| | Fore Topgallant | 18 | 5.1 | 4 | - | - | |
| | Mizzen Top | 26 | 7.36 | 4.5 | - | - | |
| | Spritsail Top | 20 | 5.66 | 4 | - | - | |
| **Yards** | Main | 69 | 19.54 | 13 | 26 ells | - | |
| | Fore | 60ft 6in | 17.14 | 11 | 22 ells | - | |
| | Mizzen | 62 | 17.55 | 7.5 | 24.5 ells | - | |
| | Spritsail | 45 | 12.74 | 7 | 17.5 ells | - | |
| | Main Top | 36 | 10.19 | 7 | 13.5 ells | - | |
| | Fore Top | 32 | 9.1 | 6 | 11.5 ells | - | |
| | Sprit Top | 20 | 5.66 | 4.5 | 8 ells | - | |
| | Main Topgallant | 22 | 6.23 | 4.5 | - | - | |
| | Fore Topgallant | 16 | 4.53 | 4 | - | - | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mizzen Top | 19 | 5.38 | 4 | - | - | |
| **Channels** | Main | 27ft 5.5in | 7.79 | 17in (0.44m) | - | 3.5in (0.1m) | 7 Chain Plates |
| | Fore | 22ft 3in | 6.31 | - | - | - | 6 Chain Plates |
| | Mizzen | 10 | 2.83 | - | - | - | 4 Chain Plates |

Table 1. Dimensions and conversions of spars.