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“I am not afraid of the Gallows”¹:

The Public Executions of Six Pirates in Puritan New England

Mary Bogart

HIST 4800: Research Project, Final Stage

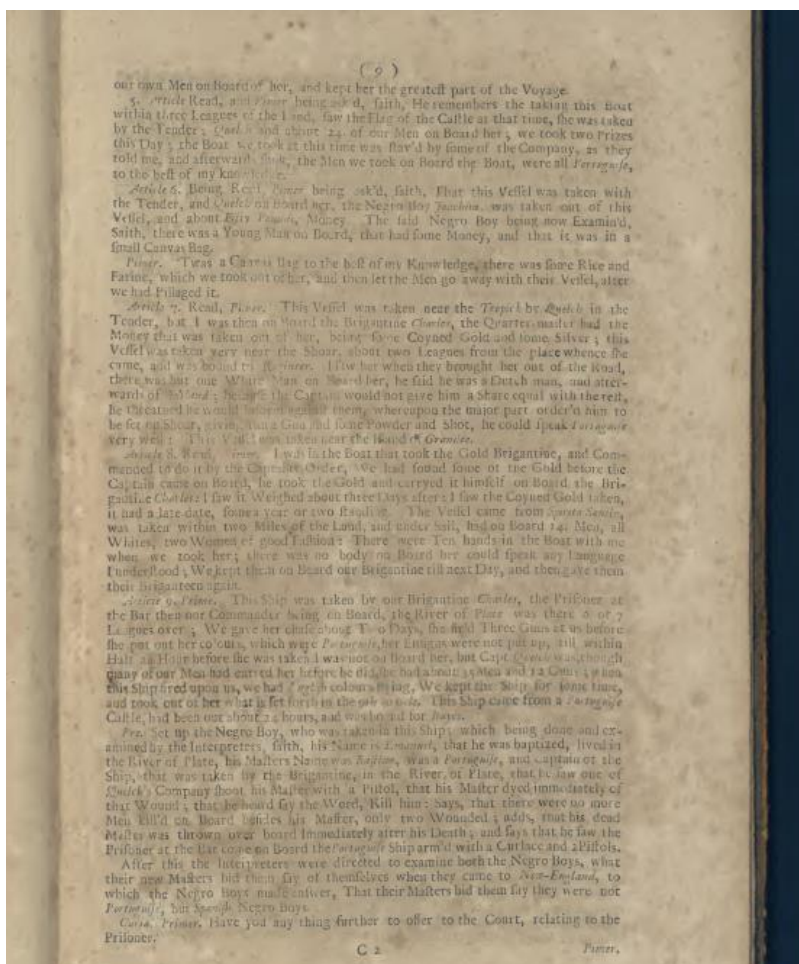
December 23, 2013

¹ “An account of the behaviour and last dying speeches of the six pirates, that were executed on Charles River, Boston side on Fryday June 30th 1704. Viz. Capt. John Quelch, John Lambert, Christopher Scudamore, John Miller, Erasmus Peterson and Peter Roach,” (Boston: Nicholas Boone, 1704). Hereafter “Six pirates.”

In early Boston society, public execution of criminals was a common practice that continued on for multiple decades. In these types of executions, masses of people would come together to listen to a sermon given by a Puritan minister, hear the last words of the condemned criminal, then witness the killing. In this essay, I will analyze the trial and execution of six men accused of piracy, robbery, and murder in 1704. Puritan magistrates oversaw the trial and execution and recorded both in some detail. I will argue that these leaders were concerned with upholding Puritan values but also wanted to gain social acceptance, money, and publicity for themselves.

In many of the historical books and scholarly journal articles I have read, the blame for the prolongation of these executions is attributed to Puritan beliefs. My research looks further into the writings of historians Masur, Cohen, Bosco, Cooper, Linders, and Williams to show that Puritan beliefs were a factor but not the sole reason for the continuation of public hangings in early America. I show that a combination of influences, such as social approval, money, and desire for publicity prolonged the duration of public executions.

Some context is necessary to thoroughly understand the last accounts of the six pirates who were executed in 1704. The trial that convicted and sentenced these pirates was documented in a book now kept in the Library of Congress. This book is presumably the original copy and is very difficult to understand. Since much of the ink on the pages is faded, reading the book was a tough task. Combined with an old fashion language style, the record was hard to comprehend. For example, the author of this record used an 'f' in place of an 's' in the majority of words. This replacement of letters made document confusing and difficult to follow. Attempting to critically analyze this trial record was a challenge.



The trial began on June 13th, 1704 and concluded on June 21st in the same year.³

Over this nine day period, the court met a total of five times (on the thirteenth, the sixteenth, the nineteenth, the twentieth, and the twenty-first) to go over all of the crimes the pirates were accused of, declare them guilty, and decide the punishment for their

² Image courtesy of the Library of Congress

website: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/service/lawlib/law0001/2010/201000302205917/201000302205917.pdf>.

³ "The Arraignment, Tryal, and Condemnation of Capt. John Quelch, And Others of his Company, Ec. for Sundry Piracies, Robberies, and Murder, Committed upon the Subjects of the King of Portugal, Her Majesty's Allie, on the Coast of Brazil, &c. who Upon full Evidence, were found Guilty, at the Court-House in Boston, on the Thirteenth of June, 1704. By Virtue of a Commission, grounded upon the Act of the Eleventh and Twelfth Years of King William, For the more Effectual Suppression of Piracy. With the Arguments of the QUEEN's Council, and Council for the Prisoners upon the said Act. Perused By his Excellency JOSEPH DUDLET, Esq; Captain-General and Commander in Chief in and over Her Majesty's Province of the Massachusetts-Bay, In New-England, in America, &c. To which are also added, some PAPERS that were produc'd at the Tryal abovesaid. With An Account of the Ages of the several Prisoners, and the Pirates where they were Born," (London: Ben. Bragg, 1705). Hereafter "Pirate Tryal."

wrongdoings. The pirates were suspected of piracy, robbery, and murder during this trial and the prosecutors pulled a variety of evidence and witnesses to help prove that the six men were guilty on all three counts.

The document that recorded the trial in its entirety showed that piracy, robbery, and murder were principal concerns for authorities and justified the publication of this sensational trial. The hearing called upon a series of witnesses that told a drawn out story about the six pirates and their criminal escapades that extended over the time span between January to December of 1703.⁴ The counts of piracy and robbery included the seizing of Portuguese boats from which the pirates stole the fish, salt, and Brazilian sugar.⁵ The monetary value of boats and items that were pirated were continuously valued throughout the trial. By the end of the various counts of piracy and robberies, the total amount of damage the pirates were being charged with added up to 7,570 pounds and 75 shillings.⁶ The pirates racked up a hefty tab during their crime spree and if this amount did not get the pirates in enough trouble already, the trial had not even covered to the charge of murder yet.

Another key importance of this trial stemmed from the accusation that the pirates killed the captain of a Portuguese vessel. Since Portugal was an ally of England, the England court was faced with the pressure to properly reprimand these criminals in order to preserve the peace between England and the colonies. The witnesses of the homicide were asked to describe what they saw and/or what they heard about the murder of the Portuguese captain. One of the witnesses that the court called upon was a young boy who

⁴ "Pirate Tryal," 2-4.

⁵ "Pirate Tryal," 2-3.

⁶ "Pirate Tryal," 2-4. In present-day currency, this amount would total to be at least one million pounds.

was a slave of the Portuguese captain referred to as “the Negro Boy”⁷ throughout the document. Since the boy spoke a different language, he was interpreted to responding in trial that, “he saw one of [Captain John] Quelch’s Company shoot his Master with a Pistol, that his Master died immediately of that Wound.”⁸ The court later called the skilled sailor, Matthew Prymer, to testify against the six pirates. The mariner was asked if he recalled the captain of the Portuguese vessel in question, and if so, could he tell the court who killed the captain. Prymer said, “The Captain was thrown Overboard before I came on Board, he was said to be killed by Scudamore our Cooper.”⁹ The man Prymer referred to in his statement was Pirate Christopher Scudamore, a crewmate of the six pirates. These witness statements proved to the court that the crew of pirates was cumulatively to blame for the death of the Portuguese captain and, as such, all six would serve the same punishment for the murder.

Near the end of the trial, Pirate Scudamore was brought to the bar. The young slave boy who belonged to the Portuguese captain was asked to identify whether Scudamore was the man who killed his master. The boy was again interpreted saying, “That was the Man who kill’d his Master.”¹⁰ The pirate was asked what he had to say to the accusation from the slave boy, to which Scudamore simply stated, “I did not kill the Captain of the Portuguese Ship.”¹¹ Shortly after this portion of the trial, the court declared the six pirates needed to change their plea from not guilty to guilty on all of the charges brought forth against them. The court claimed that this choice would be proper and more responsible of them, but regardless of the choice the six pirates made on their plea, the punishment for their crimes

⁷ “Pirate Tryal.”

⁸ “Pirate Tryal,” 9.

⁹ “Pirate Tryal,” 11.

¹⁰ “Pirate Tryal,” 17.

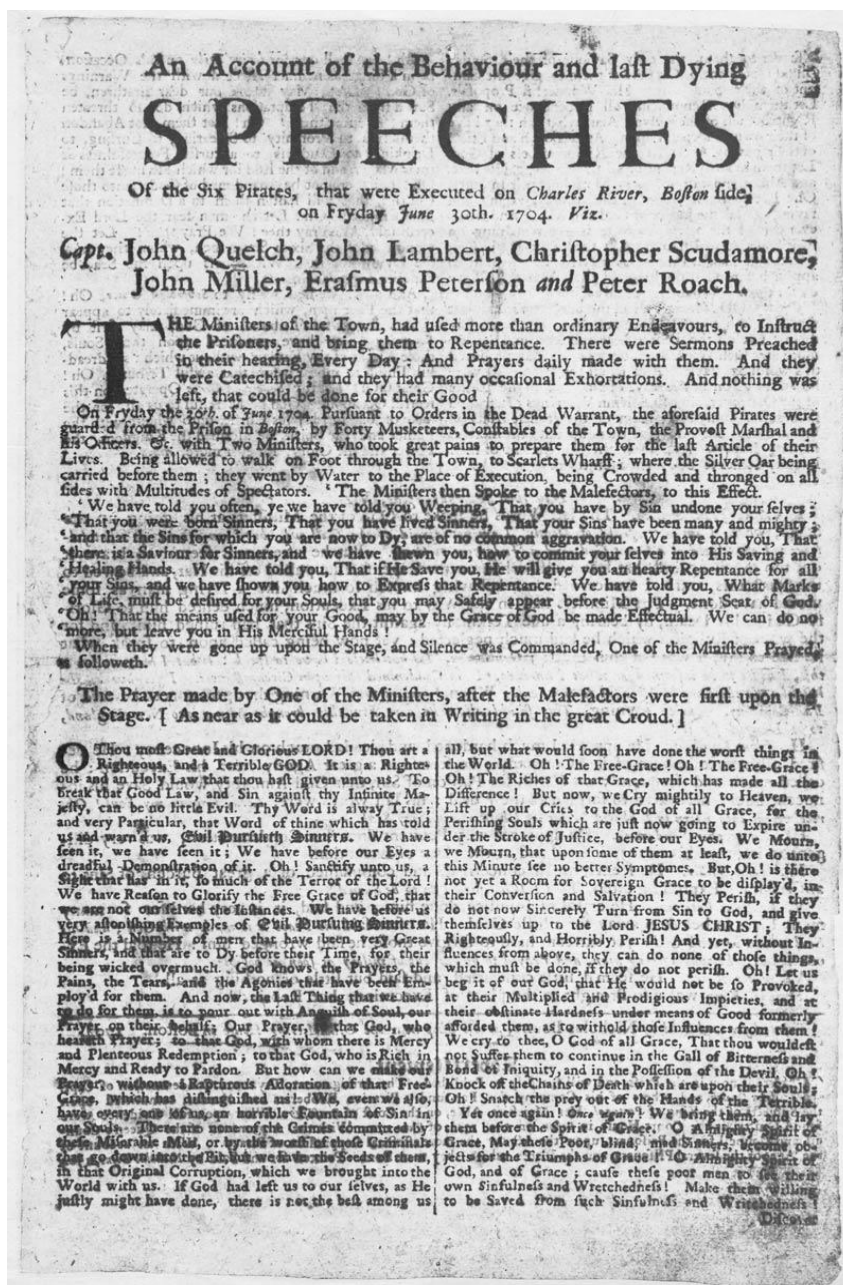
¹¹ Ibid.

would not be altered. The trial came to a conclusion when the court officially declared the six pirates guilty on all charges against them. The end of the document noted the date of execution and names of the six pirates' to be executed.¹²

To accompany this trial is a broadside with the last accounts of the six pirates who were being publicly hanged on the Boston side of the Charles River. This was written by an unknown author on June 30th, 1704. Contrary to the trial record of the six pirates, the broadside was much easier to read due to the Colonial Williamsburg website, History.org, having a clearly typed copy. I felt that I was able to understand the execution of the pirates much better because of this electronic copy. The old fashion language was still a challenge, but I feel that I was able to comprehend the event that the author described.

The anonymous author of the broadside documented the ministers' sermons being given leading up to the hanging, as well as the final words of the pirates. The author also documented some of the crowd's reaction to the sermon/last words throughout the broadside. At the end of the broadside, there was a note that mentioned who this document was published for and how much the copies of the document were worth. This document was written to record the events that took place during the public execution so that it could be later published for the general public to read. Within this broadside, strong attitudes were demonstrated by a Puritan society in early America.

¹² "Pirate Tryal," 19.



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Puritan scripture was a big factor for why people from early Boston society were accepting of public executions. Throughout the sermons given by Puritan ministers, as documented in the broadside depicting the hanging of the six pirates on June 30th, 1704, strong religious beliefs are expressed about what should be done with sinners. One of the

¹³ Image courtesy of the Library of Congress website: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/rbpe.03303400>.

ministers preached during the sermon, “we Lift up our Cries to the God of all Grace, for the, Perishing Souls which are just now going to Expire under the Stroke of Justice, before our Eyes.”¹⁴ From this quotation, the reader could interpret that the “justice” about to be given to the criminals was out of anyone’s control. The Puritan minister spoke as if the execution of the six pirates was a necessity because once they were dead, the criminals would be with God, awaiting the ultimate judgment. This quote is just one example of how the Puritan ministers would use God and their religious views as justification for publically executing a criminal.

Another example of Puritan views being displayed within the primary document of the final accounts of each of the six pirates was in Captain John Quelch’s dying words. The author described the attitude of the captain as he approached the stage for his execution as moderately inconsistent. Captain Quelch was first documented saying to one of the ministers, “I am not afraid of Death, I am not afraid of the Gallows, but I am afraid of what follows; I am afraid of a Great God, and a Judgment to Come.”¹⁵ Though shortly after that statement, Captain Quelch acted as if he had done nothing to deserve death by saying, “I desire to be informed for what I am here, I am Condemned only upon Circumstances.”¹⁶ The first statement suggested that Captain Quelch was fearful of meeting God because he was a sinner. The second statement proposed that Captain Quelch no longer saw the error in his actions and blamed society along with its unreasonable laws. The Captain’s responses show that he was at first influenced by Puritan beliefs, but later, when he was truly faced with death, he no longer chose to abide by the Puritan teachings.

¹⁴ “Six pirates.”

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

The reaction to the Puritan belief system demonstrated by Captain John Qulech is relatable to the response of Ester Rogers and other criminals as retold by Daniel Williams in his article, "Behold A Tragic Scene Strangely Changed Into A Theater of Mercy": The Structure and Significance of Criminal Conversion Narratives in Early New England. In this article, Williams described multiple narratives of converted criminals faced with capital punishment and how Puritan ministers used them as an example. Dealing with Ester Rogers, Williams discussed, "The ministers' eagerness to take advantage of her confrontation with death, to create a dramatic character out of the real person and to surround her with a spiritually significant setting."¹⁷ This shows how the teachings of Puritan ministers were based off of the convicted criminals and inevitably caused the continuation of public executions.

Louis P. Masur's historical book, Rites of Execution, was written as an overview of the history of execution. The historian wrote a great amount of information describing the early forms of public executions and the progression to private execution over time. One of Masur's main arguments of the book was neatly summed up in the second chapter: "authorities designed public hangings as a demonstration of the power of government and a warning to those who violated the law."¹⁸ The research Masur did on public executions centered on the idea of Puritan beliefs being the main contributor to the continuation of public executions.

¹⁷ Williams, Daniel E. "Behold A Tragic Scene Strangely Changed Into A Theater of Mercy": The Structure and Significance of Criminal Conversion Narratives in Early New England." (*American Quarterly*. no. 5, 1986): 829.

¹⁸ Masur, Louis P. *Rites of Execution*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 27.

My research supports Masur's argument. The primary sources show that Puritan beliefs, among other elements, were a root cause for public executions carrying on for as long as they did. Masur's findings revealed that the Puritan societal influence that was in place during this time period reached as far as the government. The people in power were Puritans themselves so policies and procedures were implemented in the way that they saw most fitting to their society.

These attitudes recorded in the broadside support Daniel A. Cohen's argument in, "In Defense of the Gallows: Justifications of Capital Punishment in New England Execution Sermons, 1674-1825." This historian's piece was about how Puritan scripture was the main reason for the continuation of public executions.¹⁹ Cohen unearthed documents that recorded Puritan sermons where the ministers state if one man kills another man, the murderer must die.²⁰ This was one of many examples where Puritans boldly decide the fate of a person after they commit a crime.

Among the historians I analyze in this paper, research in this area of history shows that the Puritans were hard-headed and had a cut-throat approach to morals. They did not seek rehabilitation for criminals, only death, since the Puritans believed the only way a criminal could be forgiven for their sins was to repent and face God. This ideology demonstrates how the Puritans wanted to continue the practice of public executions. They did not want to help sinners reform. Criminals were viewed as the weeds corrupting society that needed to be removed permanently. Since the beliefs of the Puritans were so

¹⁹ Cohen, Daniel A. "In Defense of the Gallows: Justifications of Capital Punishment in New England Execution Sermons, 1674-1825." (*American Quarterly*. no. 2, 1988): 147-64.

²⁰ Cohen, "In Defense of the Gallows," 148.

black and white, they were not able to see the gray that could have found an alternative to capital punishment.

Another pirate in the broadside was the Pirate John Lambert. This pirate plead innocence as he came closer to execution. The author documented that the pirate appeared to be in agony and repeatedly asked for God to forgive his sins. Pirate Lambert's very last words were written as, "Lord, forgive my Soul! Oh, receive me into Eternity! blessed Name of Christ receive my Soul."²¹ These actions and words suggest that the pirate was very much afraid of death and was attempting to repent for his sins to God right up to the end. The Puritan teachings were definitely having an effect on Pirate Lambert as he neared death. It is likely that Pirate Lambert was strongly influenced by Puritan teachings. This type of reaction to a hanging was what Puritans wanted from a criminal because it showed the crowd that the public executions were necessary.

Pirate John Miller, like Pirate Lambert, demonstrated a fear towards God. This pirate was noted having complained about feeling a "Burden of Sins to answer for."²² He was also documented in the primary source about the execution for repeatedly exclaiming, "Lord! What shall I do to be Saved!"²³ Pirate Miller was a perfect reformed criminal for the Puritans to execute because he was cooperative, showed regret for his crimes, and appeared fearful of God's judgment. These attitudes were the perfect reactions that the Puritans hoped for in a criminal. The Puritans pushed their influence on criminals so they saw the error of their ways and feared a great God in the afterlife.

²¹ "Six pirates."

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

In Ronald A. Bosco's journal article, "Lectures at the Pillory: The Early American Execution Sermon," he argued that public executions were used by the Puritans as a means of converting people into their faith.²⁴ The Puritan ministers used execution sermons as a way to guide the behaviors of society. The minister would tell the audience how they could live a pure life and how they could avoid being executed. This article explains how Puritans utilized the death sentence of a criminal as means of pushing their beliefs on people and sustaining a society that functioned off of those values. The use of public executions was a matter of controlling and maintaining an ideal Puritan society, which was a large reason as to why the Puritans thrived for so long.

My research supports Bosco's argument that Puritan beliefs were a major cause for the prolonging of public executions. His findings that dealt with the association between capital punishment and Puritan sermons was a perfect example of how the Puritan ministers used public executions to push their ideals onto society. This behavior was documented in the broadside concerning the execution of the six pirates. In the beginning of the primary source, the author wrote down the sermon that a few Puritan ministers did before the execution. Within this sermon, very strong Puritan ideologies were communicated to a crowd of people that were condemning the pirates. The words that were recorded from that event demonstrate how the Puritans used capital punishment to pass along their beliefs to the public.

Bosco's article is comparable to Cohen's article. In both historians' writings, they mainly argued that the Puritans were the leading cause to the prolongation of public

²⁴ Bosco, Ronald A. "Lectures at the Pillory: The Early American Execution Sermon." (American Quarterly. no. 2, 1978): 156-76.

executions, but they each had a different approach in proving their point. Bosco's article discussed the idea in a broad sense, using large chunks of time for his examples of when the Puritans were using public executions. Cohen, on the other hand, found specific primary sources where he could pull direct quotes from Puritan sermons. Each historians' work provided excellent findings that gave strong examples to help support my argument that Puritans were a part of the continuation of public executions.

Pirate Christopher Scudamore, the man accused of murdering the captain of a Portuguese vessel, was the third listed on the broadside and one of the more reserved pirates. This pirate may not have had any last words recorded in the document but his behaviors were written down. The author of the broadside noted that Pirate Scudamore, "appeared very Penitent since his Condemnation, was very diligent to improve his time going to, and at the place of Execution."²⁵ This suggests that the pirate was remorseful for his crimes and was ready to pay for his wrongdoings. From the way I read this excerpt, this pirate gave up once he was arrested and realized there was nothing he could say or do to prevent his inevitable death. Since Pirate Scudamore was not recorded to have said anything during his execution process, his actions were only speculations made by a Puritan author. Knowing from the primary document that recorded the trial, I can infer that Pirate Scudamore felt a heavy weight of guilt over murdering the captain of the Portuguese boat.

The final pirate listed in the broadside primary source went by the name Peter Roach, and he, much like Pirate Scudamore, was documented as an aloof individual. This pirate had nearly nothing written about him in the broadside but I believe it is important to

²⁵ "Six pirates."

include his behaviors along with the other pirates in the crew. The author only said that Pirate Roach “seem'd little concerned, and said but little or nothing at all.”²⁶ Nothing else was written about this man so that makes analyzing his last accounts very difficult. Even in the primary document that recorded the trial, Pirate Roach hardly spoke. I have concluded that Pirate Roach felt neutral about his execution because he neither begged for forgiveness, nor did he refute his sentencing at the trial and the execution ceremony.

In David D. Cooper's book, The Lesson of the Scaffold, the author argued that public executions were used as entertainment and a teaching tool for civilians. The people in power would take law offenders and gruesomely kill them in front of a large mob. Then they would proceed to leave the corpses out to rot in public view. Cooper noted that, “there was no doubt that the mob enjoyed public executions, and its mood could become ugly if the pleasure of viewing a hapless victim put to death were interfered with by the authorities.”²⁷ Due to the large attendance and its extensive feedback, there was an overwhelming level of approval towards these actions that encouraged this form of punishment to continue on for as long as it did.

Cooper's book showed the link between the continuation of public execution and the audience's acceptance of this violent behavior. People who lived during this time appreciated this form of capital punishment and went as far as to demand for the executions to be more violent. When looking at the primary source, it is unclear how the audience reacted to the punishment of the six pirates, but it could be inferred that there was an overall approval of their deaths. I make this assumption based on how the author of

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Cooper, David D. *The Lesson of the Scaffold*. (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1974), 3.

the primary source wrote about the event. Nowhere in the broadside was there a tone of disapproval on the punishment the pirates were about to endure. I believe that the nature in which the broadside was written agrees with Cooper's findings that audience approval affected the continuation of the public executions.

In Annulla Linder's scholarly article, "The Execution Spectacle and State Legitimacy: The Changing Nature of the American Execution Audience, 1833-1937," the historian writes about the audience's influence on the continuation and reform of public executions. She wrote her first point about the audience, "the rowdiness of the crowd made it increasingly difficult to maintain a clear distinction between a solemn execution and a festive holiday celebration."²⁸ I would like to focus on this section because I believe it is the most relevant to my research. Linder discussed in her article how the crowds at the executions would vary between excitable and grave. Of course, over time the audience transformed their attitudes toward public executions, which is why this type of capital punishment is being called into question today. This is what Linder argued for the remainder of her article.

I found that that the point I previously cited in Linder's writing interesting, as well as useful in my research. She showed in her work that the audience was a major influence of the prolongation of public executions because society enjoyed going to the events. Although there was a person being killed in front of them, in many scenarios, the crowds were entertained by the blood bath. It was not until the audience's attitudes became more frequently solemn at the executions that change started to take place in deposing the

²⁸ Linders, Annulla. "The Execution Spectacle and State Legitimacy: The Changing Nature of the American Execution Audience, 1833-1937." (*Law & Society Review*. no. 3, 2002): 607.

practice of public executions. Unfortunately, there were more factors to overcome before society would be able to make that shift.

Another element that influenced society during this time span was the print media. After all of the last words and behaviors of the six pirates, there are notes about the publishing and distribution of the broadside. The author notes that this work was, "*Printed for and Sold by Nicholas Boone, at his shop near the Old Meeting-House in Boston. 1704.*"²⁹ This mention in the broadside is a vital piece of evidence that this writing was, in fact, a published work that was sold to the public. Nicholas Boone used the documentation of the execution of six pirates as means of collecting money, as well as spreading the awareness of the consequences of misconduct. This quotation helps to prove that people used public executions for monetary and socialization purposes.

In the book, *Pillars of Salt, Monuments of Grace*, Daniel A. Cohen argued that the continuation of public execution had less to do with the Puritans, but more to do with the idea that the publishing market was making a substantial amount of revenue.³⁰ Even after Puritan society declined, public executions persisted on for several more decades. Writers continued to attend the executions and document everything that was said and done throughout the process then later publish the happenings for the public to purchase. In this book, Cohen said that public executions were used as a monetary gimmick because society saw these events as entertainment. Public executions became a social norm and people enjoyed watching criminals being put to death. Cohen's book showed that the Puritan

²⁹ "Six pirates."

³⁰ Cohen, Daniel A. *Pillars of Salt, Monuments of Grace*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

beliefs were not the sole reason for the continuation of public executions and that other factors (in this case, money and socialization) were a key component.

When reviewing my findings in Cohen's book, I saw that my argument supports his debate that public executions were partly used as a way to make money through writing and publishing the events of the executions. The fact that there is a broadside that describes everything that happened during the execution proves that it was a published work meant for people to purchase. The existence of this broadside also shows that the public had interest in reading this material, verifying that public execution was socially acceptable. Cohen's book validates my argument that money and social norms aided in the prolonging of public executions.

Pirate Erasmus Peterson was next in the broadside and full of rebellion towards the laws he and his crew broke. The pirate said that they should not be killed for the small amount of gold stolen and claimed the execution was an injustice. Pirate Peterson stated that he made his peace with God and he was to be with Him soon enough.³¹ The pirate told to his executioner that "he was a strong man, and Prayed to be put out of misery as soon as possible."³² These last words were interesting because they were so different from the other pirates in this crew. Pirate Peterson not only opposed the law, but also the puritan belief system. The pirate did not believe that God would punish him for what he had done and even believed that he and God were on good terms with one another. Pirate Peterson showed a very different reaction to his execution than the other pirates in this broadside and proved that the Puritans could not make him feel the need to repent.

³¹ "Six pirates."

³² Ibid.

In the journal article, "Puritans and Pirates: A Confrontation between Cotton Mather and William Fly in 1726" written by Daniel E. Williams, the author argued how Puritan ministers would use the execution of pirates to "dramatize" their sermons.³³ In this article, Williams analyzed an encounter that took place in Boston between a puritan minister, Cotton Mather, and a condemned pirate, William Fly. Williams discussed how Minister Mather would go to pirates after they had been recently sentenced to death and tell them about God. He wanted the pirates to feel remorse for their sins and convince the pirates that Mather should give a sermon at their hanging so that their soul could be saved. Mather used the public executions of the pirates to make criminals think they were going to hell for their sins in order to gain popularity for himself and his sermons.

The problem that Mather faced with Fly was the pirate did not see what he did wrong. Fly refused to repent for his sins, which "represented a much greater refusal to recognize the sacred world that Boston had been established to protect."³⁴ This insubordination infuriated Mather so that after the execution, Mather wrote *The Vial poured out upon the Sea (1726)* to twist the rebellious nature of Pirate Fly as foolish and damned, rather than courageous and defiant.³⁵ This writing made it appear that Pirate Fly was nothing but a lost soul rather than a failure for Mather because he was unable to convert Fly. When looking at public executions from this side, it would seem that Mather was a little more worried about his self-image and sustaining the popularity of his sermons than actually teaching the beliefs of the Puritans.

³³ Williams, Daniel E. "Puritans and Pirates: A Confrontation between Cotton Mather and William Fly in 1726." (*Early American Literature*. no. 3, 1987): 235.

³⁴ Williams, "Puritans and Pirates," 234.

³⁵ "Six pirates."

Williams' journal article was a wonderful example of how a Puritan minister took an unruly criminal who threatened his religion, and turned the situation into something that the minister could profit from. I believe this article stands out from other writings because it tells a story that sheds a new light on the Puritans' motives. Minister Mather was using the execution of criminals not only to sell his books and push his beliefs on the public, but he was also attempting to create a self-image. From this article, I can conclude that Puritan ministers were not just about spreading the good word, but they were also out for personal gain.

When reviewing this group of historians, all discuss their own unique ideas and assessments based on evidence they researched on public executions. Masur, Cohen, and Bosco argued in their respective historical book and scholarly articles that Puritan beliefs were the ultimate cause of the prolonged use of capital punishment in public. Historians Cooper and Linders wrote their pieces on the strong influence of society's attitudes and behaviors toward the open killings. Cohen's historical book discussed the monetary gain from the use of public executions as the key component. Finally, historian Williams' scholarly article argued that Puritan ministers used the capital punishment's setting as means to create publicity for themselves. Each of these historians has brought a collection of valid ideas to help explain the continuation of public executions.

My research supports the arguments of all the historians mentioned in this paper. The reasoning for perpetuation of public executions made by the historians included Puritan beliefs, societal acceptance, monetary needs, and personal publicity. When reviewing each of their arguments, I discovered that each of these historical writers developed excellent ideas that became apparent in the primary documents recording the

trial and hanging of the six pirates. These documented events provided examples that supported each of the arguments of the writers and showed that all of their historical research was valid. I have asserted my own argument that states the combination of these factors influenced the prolongation of this form of capital punishment. My research backs all six of the historians discussed and furthers the debate on public executions.

Once the broadside, scholarly articles, and historical books were examined, I concluded that although Puritan beliefs were a large factor in the continuation of public execution, it was not the sole element. Factors such as society, money, and the desire for publicity were driving forces behind the persistence of public executions. I find it interesting how in current American society, public executions are nonexistent and it is much rarer that a criminal is sentenced to death. People seem to have evolved their mindset on this method of correction. There exists a large population of people that believe in the rehabilitation of criminals, rather than sentencing them to death. What made American society transition from the prevalent use of public executions to the current movements to abolish the states' ability to use the death sentence all together?

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