

Margaret Willson. *Seawomen of Iceland. Survival on the Edge*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press and Museum Tusculanum Press (Denmark), www.uwapress.uw.edu, 2019. 312 pp., illustrations, maps, tables, notes, bibliography, index. US \$24.95, paper; ISBN 978-0-29574-421-6.

There are many silences that exist in historical research and writing. Among them is that of Icelandic seawomen and the role they played, and continue to play, in both society and the fishing industry. Anthropologist Margaret Willson breaks the silence with *Survival on the Edge: Seawomen of Iceland*. She brilliantly interweaves her personal and professional experiences as she researched and wrote the book. Her narrative is broken into seven chapters offering readers a thematic breakdown with some chronology. Arguing the importance of seawomen and the way their stories have been systematically removed from Icelandic society, Willson blends gender, class, labour, and generational relationships to support her argument, thus creating an interdisciplinary study.

In the twenty-first century, Iceland has become known as one of the most gender equal nations in the world. This has not always been the case, however, especially when it comes to fishing. Men held leadership roles on the boat while many women began in menial positions. They needed to prove that they could work as hard, or harder, than the men on board. As Willson notes, many women also had to deal with harassment from some of the crew. Over time, however, these women gained the respect of seamen. Willson outlines the complicated relationships between men and women that existed on the small fishing boats.

Icelandic history is laden with sagas focusing on heroics tied to the set-

tlement of the island nation. These sagas remained important in society and have been tightly bound to how some Icelanders live their lives. Willson connects twenty-first century Icelanders to those of earlier centuries through fishing the same fjords, making modern seawomen the descendants of earlier ones. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, women regularly appeared on fishing ships but were required to wear long, woolen skirts. In perilous seas, this often proved treacherous. Although today's seawomen do not face this or other issues like their early sisters, there are still gender issues that arise aboard modern fishing boats.

Seawomen's final chapter continues the gender study but introduces the new facet of generational differences. Understandably, Willson notes, younger generations of women place more emphasis on education and working in the cities. Based on her analysis and interviews, older generations perceive this focus on the cities as damaging to Icelandic society and history. This chapter is somewhat weaker than the others. Though Willson brings her history into the modern era and discusses the younger generation's focus on education versus going to sea, she offers little in the way of a conclusion. Perhaps if she had begun by presenting a direct thesis, she could have offered readers a stronger conclusion.

As many readers will not be well versed in Icelandic history, Willson thoughtfully decided to use the Roman alphabet for Icelandic names. She felt this would help non-Icelandic readers to remember, pronounce, and recognize names. Two maps of Iceland help readers locate the places seawomen lived and worked. Along with details and information provided in the beginning of the book, there is an appendix of pre-1900 seawomen. Willson also explains Icelandic names: in addition to their

given name, children's surnames consist of their father's first name followed by "son" or "dóttir" to denote a son or daughter. All of these author's additions were welcomed by this reader.

Willson's experiences, while researching seawomen, contribute to her description of the island nation and its people. She outlines the danger inherent in going to sea over the last few centuries. She describes the ominous sky and unruly ocean waves as she makes her way through and around Iceland's many fiords. Over time, women sought to find their place on fishing boats, either because they crewed their family's boat, or they employed their skill with commercial boat skippers. No matter their reason, fishing allowed women an opportunity to earn a wage well beyond anything that could be made on land.

Willson's training as an anthropologist allowed her to gain an understanding of how and why women had been revered in earlier centuries for serving as everything from deckhands to skippering their own ship. She connects to the past through meeting and interviewing modern seawomen, making good use of her contacts throughout the nation. As well as diving deeply into the Icelandic archives, she also makes use of oral histories of early seawomen that have been passed down through the generations. In breaking the silence on Icelandic seawomen, Willson employs sources currently available. Should she or others continue the study, one hopes more sources will be found.

This book is an interesting read and difficult to put down. Willson's writing and storytelling is engaging and stirring. Those interested in women's history, gender studies, or maritime history will find *Seawomen of Iceland: Survival on the Edge* a worthy addition to their reading list.

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David Wilson. *Suppressing Piracy in the Early Eighteenth Century. Pirates, Merchants and British Imperial Authority in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans*. Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, www.boydellandbrewer.com, 2021. 312 pp., illustrations, notes, appendices, bibliography. US \$130.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-78327-595-3.

The word "pirates" immediately catches the reader's imagination. I think all of us have a secret fascination with these irascible characters of history. Whether we remember the epic tales of pirates that we read as kids, or the blockbuster movies that we all watch with rapt attention, pirates carry an air of mystery and fascination. Yet most of us know very little about piracy as a historical process. We tend to be caught up with the image of the pirate but not the practical realities of piracy. Piracy, or perhaps more importantly, the ability of the Royal Navy to crush piracy, has been taken as a historical truth. After all, with the most powerful navy in the world by the early eighteenth century, it makes sense that Britain was the one nation capable of suppressing piracy at the time.

David Wilson's *Suppressing Piracy in the Early Eighteenth Century* represents the latest word on the subject of piracy in the eighteenth century and fundamentally challenges the role of the Royal Navy in its elimination. The author's subject is not really pirates, but their victims, the various groups and individuals engaged in the vast British enterprise of "Empire" as it spread across the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. It is these individuals who sought to suppress the threat of piracy. Wilson argues that between 1716 and 1726, a large proportion of the people who relied on maritime trade turned to piracy along the fringes of empire where there was no effective enforcement of the rule of law. In the process, the antag-