



Sailors and Homosexuality: From Ancient Argo to Don't Ask/Don't Tell

Michael Hone

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Nothing in homoerotic fantasy exceeds the union of men and boys on ships, often situational, where there is no other form of relief except solitary. Sex was just as often omniseual, as will be seen in the first section of this book dedicated to the Argo, a vessel of lovers happy to share themselves onboard and on the beaches they pulled onto for the night, at times in the company of women who hungered for lusty males. At the high point of British naval power homeless boys were welcome on ships as servants and help, and each had learned in advance, from other lads, what would be expected of them. Sexual liberty on the open seas was especially prevalent during the reign of James I, he who announced before his Council his love of a boy, the reason this book is dedicated to him. Pirates took their loves so seriously that indivisible couples formed, and in one documented case a captured female was caste overboard as useless in the fulfillment of the men's needs. One French captain sought out youths that he married to older salts, thusly ensuring the protection of the boys and the twilight years of the men. Boys who protested walked the plank, and in our own times, as the reader will see, boys are also done away with, one of whom was recently stomped to death with such violence that his family recognized him only by a tattoo. Whereas Magellan garroted a man too frisky with cabin boys, today's homophobic murderers may be sentenced to life by a naval court, but the sentences come up for review yearly, meaning they can be freed at any time. A sailor on the USS Belleau Wood signed his death warrant by sending out a message to other ships, "2-Q-T-2-B-S-T-R-8" (too cute to be straight), while on the other end of the spectrum a Navy SEAL married his lover, and it is no longer unheard of for a debarking officer to be met on shore with an intimate kiss from his male mate. Real Marines star in gay porn flicks and two of Hollywood's vintage actors, Hudson and Hunter, had been real-life sailors. A sublime opera, the homoerotic Billy Budd, was created by Benjamin Britten, the wide-screen version produced by Peter Ustinov and starred Terence Stamp. Genet gained immortality through his book Querrel de Brest, as did the film version's homosexual hero Brad Davis, in Fassbinder's final opus before his overdose.

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