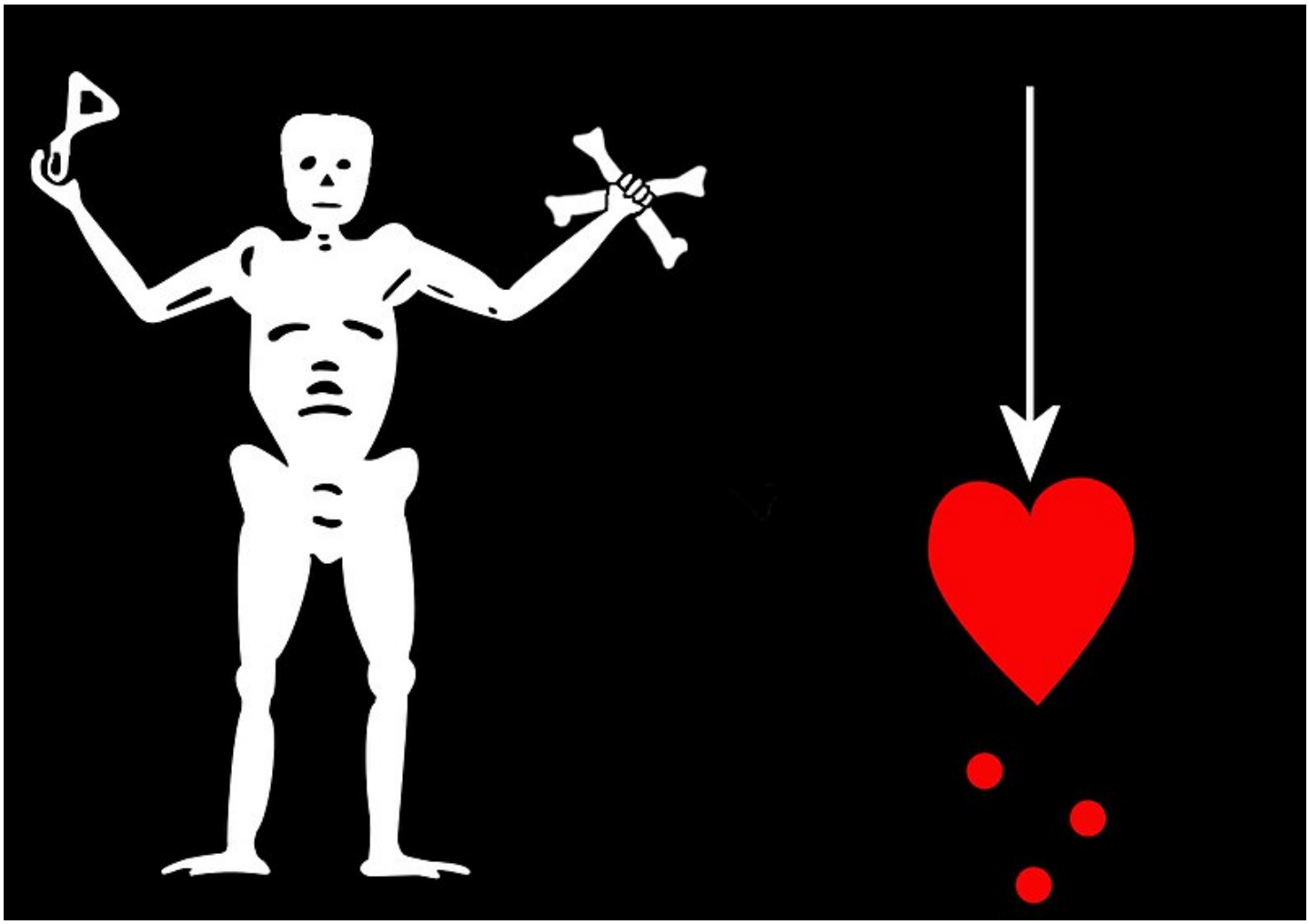
Twitter Thread by Vagina Museum

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Since you're all about sea shanties these days, WHO WANTS TO HEAR ABOUT GAY MARRIAGE IN THE GOLDEN AGE OF PIRACY?



Now, a lot of what we're about to tell you is the subject of debate, because history, when written down, tends to elide homosexuality. Therefore, there's nothing in history which outright says "these pirates were hella gay and marrying each other all across the high seas".

So, among pirate communities during the golden age of piracy, there was an arrangement called "matelotage". Crew members could form a bond together where one would inherit the other's wealth - rather like a marriage.

Now, some say that matelotage was a strictly economic arrangement for division of assets, but tbh, that's what a conventional marriage is, so.

There was definitely passion involved in some matelotages - for example, when Captain Bartholomew Roberts stabbed a crewman for being rude to him, the dead man's matelot got VERY angry, confronted his captain furiously... and Roberts stabbed him, too. Then had him beaten.

One of the more famous matelotages was between Robert Culliford and John Swann. They lived together openly, with Swann being referred to as "a great consort"... these guys properly shared a life together.

As we said, there's no hard evidence that any of these men were in romantic or sexual relationships with their matelots, but on balance of probability, it's statistically unlikely no men were jolly rogering each other when spending a long time at sea in one another's company.

In the Royal Navy, it was definitely acknowledged that men often shagged each other at sea, and they made that very illegal, punishable by whipping and even death. Pirate ships, though, didn't have these restrictions, separating themselves from rules of empires

Then there's Tortuga. The French governer of Tortuga was a little concerned by the gender balance on the island - it was, frankly, a sausage fest, and it's likely some pirates were living openly in same sex relationships. So Le Vasseur decided to try to solve it.

1650 women were brought to Tortuga, a mix of prostitutes and criminals, to try to civilise these horny, horny gay pirates. It was a nasty and misogynistic arrangement as women were sold off at auctions.

And it also didn't exactly curb the same sex relationships among pirates; some of them formed three-way relationships between their matelot and a woman. So now we have POLYAMOROUS BI PIRATES

We'd be remiss in this thread if we didn't also do a quick shout-out to Ann Bonny and Mary Read, about whom there's a cool story that each fell for the other's disguise as a man, and then fell for each other and formed a cross-dressing wlw pirate relationship.



(but that story probably isn't true, sadly. At some point we WILL do a thread on Bonny and Read though because they have some amazing stories we'd like to tell you about that aren't really relevant here)

Ultimately, there is no concrete proof of any homosexual relationships between pirates, because same sex love is scrubbed away by those who write and collate histories. But from where we're sitting, it looks a lot like they had gay marriage.

goodness, this blew up, here is the obligatory soundcloud: https://t.co/Hv6AVMiTXd