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Live vicariously through real-life bad girls

BYLINE: Melinda Bargreen, Seattle Times staff critic

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Bad girls are not only found in the fiction shelves. Here are a few real-life naughty women:

"Bad Girls: 26 Writers Misbehave" edited by Ellen Sussman (W.W. Norton & Co., \$24.95).

Don't miss this captivating collection of essays by some remarkable "bad girl" writers, from Erica Jong (who says she's really a good girl who just invented a naughty fictional heroine) to Joyce Maynard (who had a teenage liaison with reclusive writer J.D. Salinger and was widely reviled when she "betrayed" Salinger by writing about the affair in her 40s). These stories are funny, serious, sometimes horrifying: tales of anorexia, compulsive speeding, childhood abuse, promiscuity, lying and plenty more. They'll make you laugh, and think, and think again.

"The **Pirate Queen**" by **Susan Ronald** (HarperCollins, \$26.95).

Yes, "Good Queen Bess" (Elizabeth I) was indeed a pirate of the Caribbean (and elsewhere), though she almost certainly did not wear as much mascara as Johnny Depp. Elizabeth inherited an almost-bankrupt realm, and with the help of a team of merchant adventurers (i.e. pirates), she amassed the world's greatest empire through what historian **Susan Ronald** calls "piracy and plunder." It's **a highly colorful, swashbuckling read, one that will give you new respect for Britain's first Elizabeth.**

"Hypocrite in a Pouffy White Dress" by Susan Jane Gilman (Warner Books, \$12.95).

This endearing and often hilarious collection of autobiographical short stories is, according to author Susan Jane Gilman, "a book about growing up ambitious and engaging in some spectacularly imbecilic behavior." From her hippie days as a preschooler in a tutu to the moment of her "total ideological meltdown" in David's Bridal salon, Gilman makes you laugh out loud with her tales of errant schooldays and eccentric relatives.

"Femme Fatale: Love, Lies and the Unknown Life of Mata Hari" by Pat Shipman (William Morrow, \$25.95).

You'll have to wait a bit for this intriguing biography (due out in two weeks) of the exotic dancer who was executed for espionage after allegedly causing the deaths of 50,000 French soldiers. Born Margaretha Zelle, the self-reinvented Mata Hari "loved men ... but did not love truth," according to author Pat Shipman, who concludes that

her subject was put to death because she was too unabashedly sexy convicted "not for espionage but for her lack of shame."

Melinda Bargreen: mbargreen@seattletimes.com

Coming up

Ellen Sussman

The editor of "Bad Girls: 26 Writers Misbehave" will appear at 7:30 p.m. Thursday at Seattle's Elliott Bay Book Co. (206-624-6600 or www.elliottbaybook.com).