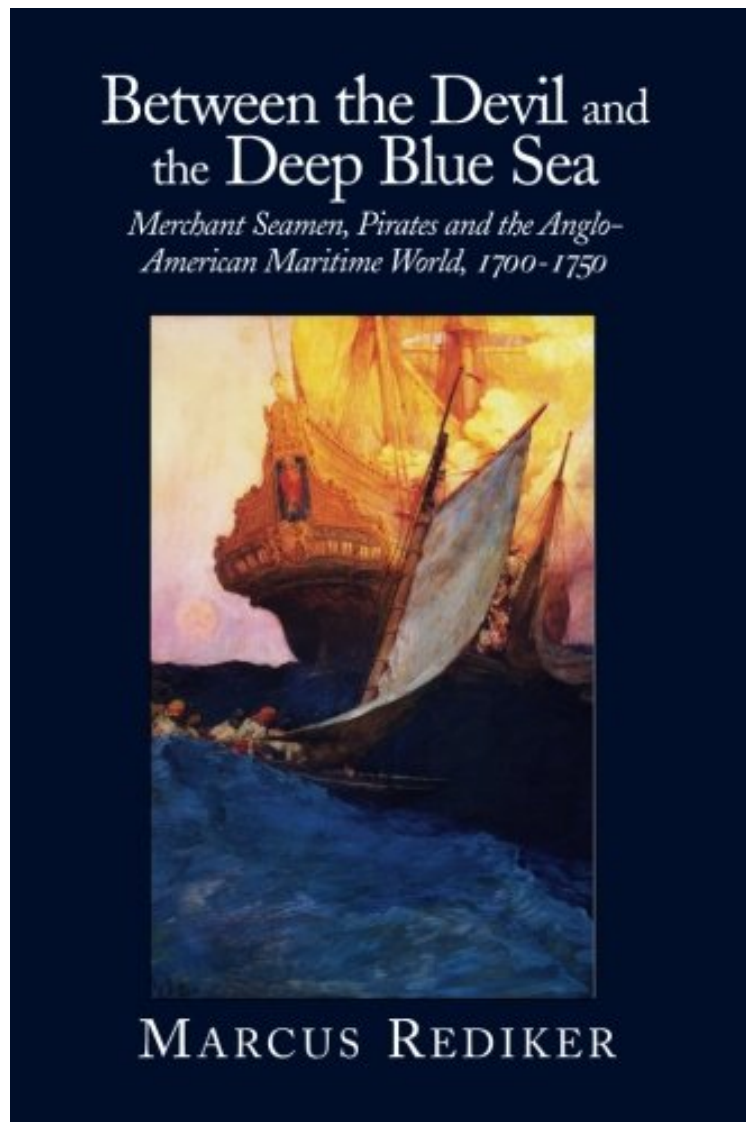


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Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700 - 1750

Marcus Rediker

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Marcus Rediker : Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700 - 1750 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700 - 1750:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea ReviewBy Jake ZirkleMarcus Redikers Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea highlights the lives of the men who set out upon merchant ships in order to make a living during the first half of the 18th century. Professor of history at the University of Pittsburgh, Rediker has created a study that does not focus upon the large picture of 18th century maritime history, but rather a social history of the men who comprised the backbone of the growing capitalist system. Redikers goal is to illuminate the struggle of the working class seamen and the brutal world they inhabited. Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea is certainly written with a Marxist view of history. The main focus of this work is the economic developments of the day and the conditions, wages, and lives of the working class. This is not the only book written by Rediker that takes an anti-Capitalist stance, as The Slave Ship shares similar traits. The title that Rediker chose is also telling because the Devil refers to the captains, who are representatives of the Capitalist system and the Deep Blue Sea represents the natural dangers that were ever present for the seamen. In Redikers opinion, the common worker was caught between two dangerous forces. Interestingly, the sailors themselves had their own unique culture in which Rediker describes to the reader. The men had their own language (including many curse words) and even their own distinctive walk. By talking about their culture, Rediker is further narrowing the focus of his study from a merchant history to a social history focused on the working class. Rediker gives a very different portrayal of life at sea than N.A.M. Rodgers gives in The Wooden World. Rodgers set out to dispel myths of brutality and tyrannical captains, while Rediker does the exact opposite. Both men were writing about roughly the same time period, but they give very different account of life at sea. Rediker describes tyrannical captains and hellish conditions aboard the ships, while Rodgers offers a more romanticized version. Rediker views piracy as a direct response to the rising capitalist system and the tyrannical rule of the captains. He describes an almost Socialist system in which the pirates split and shared the bounty that they collected. According to Rediker, the captains of the pirate ships treated the members of their crew much better than those of the merchant ships. It was for this reason that they were able to maintain their position. Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea is an extremely well-written book and it does provide insight into the lives of the common seamen, but it is not perfect. Redikers anti-Capitalist bias can be seen through the work and brings to question some of his conclusions. Overall, this book does fill a gap in the existing maritime historiography and will remain an important work.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Understanding the Lives and Working Conditions of SailorsBy Matthew HowardMuch of the piracy covered in this book was given a more thorough examination in Rediker's "Villains of All Nations", but this book's scope is bigger than the "golden age" of Atlantic piracy. In the course of my pirate research, I found this book helpful to gain a more general understanding of the lives and working conditions of all sailors at that time, and the socio-economic forces shaping those lives. Along with Rediker's "Villains" and "Slave Ship", this book forms a powerful and horrifying critique of an era.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Wow! Great book by a great writer.By A. K.Wow! Best history text I have read in years. Dr. Rediker is a unbelievable storyteller! Seriously, you will be hooked before you get to the end of the second page.Stop reading reviews and buy this book.

The common seaman and the pirate in the age of sail are romantic historical figures who occupy a special place in the popular culture of the modern age. And yet in many ways, these daring men remain little known to us. Like most other poor working people of the past, they left few first-hand accounts of their lives. But their lives are not beyond recovery. In this book, Marcus Rediker uses a huge array of historical sources (court records, diaries, travel accounts, and many others) to reconstruct the social cultural world of the Anglo-American seamen and pirates who sailed the seas in the first half of the eighteenth century. Rediker tours the sailor's North Atlantic, following seamen and their ships along the pulsing routes of trade and into rowdy port towns. He recreates life along the waterfront, where seafaring men from around the world crowded into the sailortown and its brothels, alehouses, street brawls, and city jail. His study explores the natural terror that inevitably shaped the existence of those who plied the forbidding oceans of the globe in small, brittle wooden vessels. It also treats the man-made terror--the harsh discipline, brutal floggings, and grisly hangings--that was a central fact of life at sea. Rediker surveys the commonplaces of the maritime world: the monotonous rounds of daily labor, the negotiations of wage contracts, and the bawdy singing, dancing, and tale telling that were a part of every voyage. He also analyzes the dramatic moments of the sailor's existence, as Jack Tar battled wind and water during a slashing storm, as he stood by his "brother tars" in a mutiny or a stike, and as he risked his neck by joining a band of outlaws beneath the Jolly Roger, the notorious pirate flag. Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea focuses upon the seaman's experience in order to illuminate larger historical issues such as the rise of capitalism, the genesis the free wage labor, and the growth of an international working class. These epic themes were intimately bound up with everyday hopes and fears of the common seamen.

"...an excellent up-from-the-lower deck study of deepwater sailors in the eighteenth century...the best working-class history I've read in years." Robert Schaeffer, In These Times"...No one interested in the history of the 18th century can afford to ignore this book." Christopher Hill"...A fresh and powerful analysis of the 18th century maritime world." Gary Nash"...the style is lucid, the tone is assured, the documentation professional and economical. And the book is

brought to a triumphant conclusion with two superb chapters on the seaman as the 'Spirit of Rebellion' and as a pirate...What distinguishes Rediker's work is his unwavering and unsentimental focus on the seaman's labour and experience in his cramped wooden world." E.P. Thompson, *The Guardian*"...a book that undoubtedly will have an enduring value. Every student of early eighteenth-century maritime affairs should read *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*." John D. Byrn, Jr., *The Eighteenth Century*"...luminous study of a neglected segment of colonial society." Robert M. Calhoon, *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*