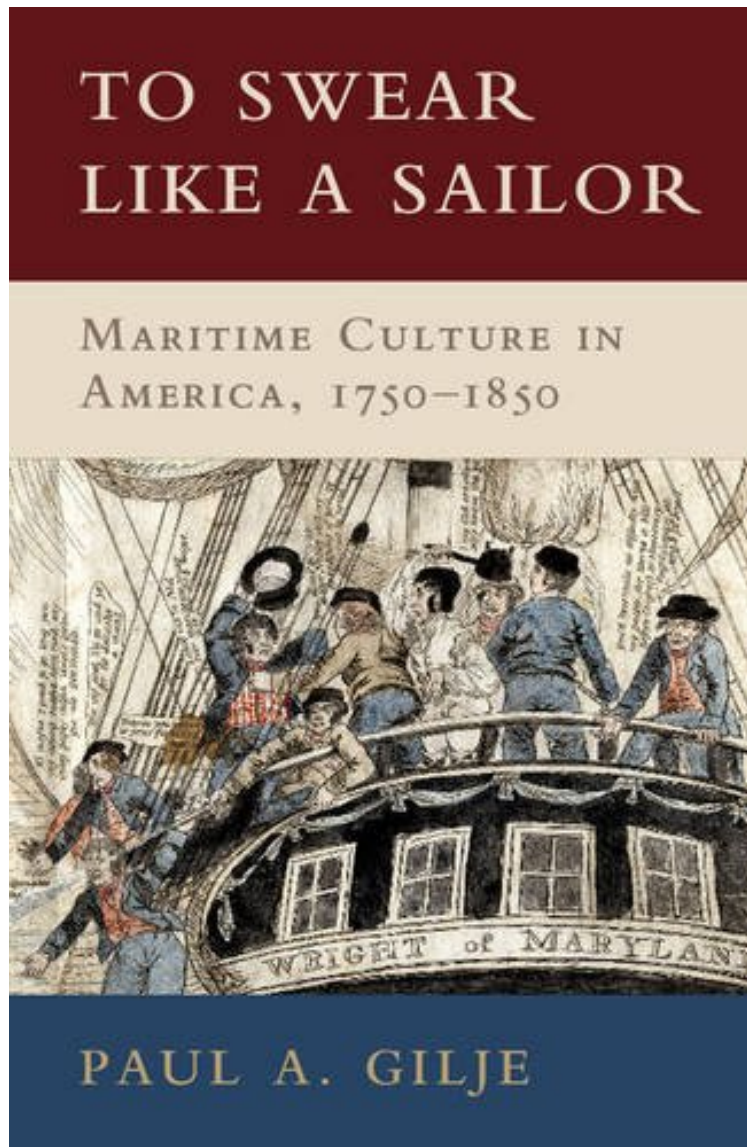


# To Swear like a Sailor: Maritime Culture in America, 1750-1850

Paul A. Gilje

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**Paul A. Gilje : To Swear like a Sailor: Maritime Culture in America, 1750-1850** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised To Swear like a Sailor: Maritime Culture in America, 1750-1850:

Anyone could swear like a sailor! Within the larger culture, sailors had pride of place in swearing. But how they swore and the reasons for their bad language were not strictly wedded to maritime things. Instead, sailor swearing, indeed all swearing in this period, was connected to larger developments. This book traces the interaction between the maritime and mainstream world in the United States while examining cursing, language, logbooks, storytelling, sailor songs, reading, images, and material goods. *To Swear Like a Sailor* offers insight into the character of Jack Tar - the common seaman - and into the early republic. It illuminates the cultural connections between Great Britain and the United States and the appearance of a distinct American national identity. The book explores the emergence of sentimental notions about the common man - through the guise of the sailor - appearing on stage, in song, in literature, and in images.

"From the pen of a premier historian of early working and seafaring Americans comes a fascinating new work of cultural history. *To Swear like a Sailor* starts with the idea that language offers a window into the intellect and the 'soul' of the user. Gilje sets out to study the expressions of his saltwater people in literally every form he can trace: curses, jargon, log books, yarns, songs, and drawings. A clever epilogue on the sea chest as the container of a sailor's trove of worldly possessions packs the whole subject back into a carrying case. The execution is both artful and accessible." John L. Larson, Purdue University, and author of *The Market Revolution*"With *To Swear like a Sailor*, Paul Gilje once more takes us below decks to life in the forecabin. In this meticulously researched, imaginative examination of sailor speech and story, song and scrimshaw, Gilje explores the complex relationships between the reality of shipboard life and the images of Jack Tar produced for American audiences. Not only does this fascinating book illuminate the meanings of sailors' distinctive argot and shipboard pastimes, it also recovers a popular culture of Jack Tars on stage and in print and sheds new light on the maritime literature of Cooper, Melville, and Dana. It's a d---d good yarn." Tamara Plakins Thornton, State University of New York, Buffalo, and author of *Nathaniel Bowditch and the Power of Numbers*"By listening keenly across the centuries to swearing and storytelling sailors, Paul Gilje brilliantly recovers the lost power of words to shock outsiders and to bind a crew together." Alan Taylor, University of Virginia, and author of *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832*"No historian has a better sense for what coursed through the minds of American mariners during the Age of Sail than Paul Gilje. With a stunning command of seafaring literature, he exhibits an eye for their vision, an ear for their voices, and a willingness to listen to them on their own terms. In *To Swear like a Sailor*, he lands you in their shoes." Daniel Vickers, University of British Columbia"Paul Gilje's *To Swear Like a Sailor* examines in detail the use of language (both foul and fair) by the American sailor from the eve of the American Revolution to the mid nineteenth century ... an excellent addition to our understanding of both life afloat and the sailor culture's integration into the larger society." Thomas Malcomson, *The Northern Mariner*"In this book, Gilje has provided an insightful cultural history ... this is an excellent book that sheds light on Jack Tar's world and its connections to shore. It should be read by all interested in early American and maritime history." Ian Yunker, *H-Net*"... a wide-ranging look at the culture of the common seaman and its connections to mainstream culture ashore through an extensive examination of print, literary, and material culture of the period, with particular emphasis on the mariner's own voice in logbooks, journals, and personal narratives. ... In examining successively the language, writing, yarning, singing, reading, and artistry of the seaman, Gilje achieves both a portrait of the American sailor and a history of nationalism in the early Republic." Kathryn Mudgett, *Early American Literature*About the AuthorPaul Gilje is a George Lynn Cross Research Professor at the University of Oklahoma. His book *Liberty on the Waterfront* (2003) won the best book award from the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic. He is the author or editor of ten other books, including, most recently, *Free Trade and Sailors' Rights in the War of 1812* (2013). He has lectured throughout the United States and in Europe and has received numerous grants to support his research. In 2009-10, he served as President of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic.