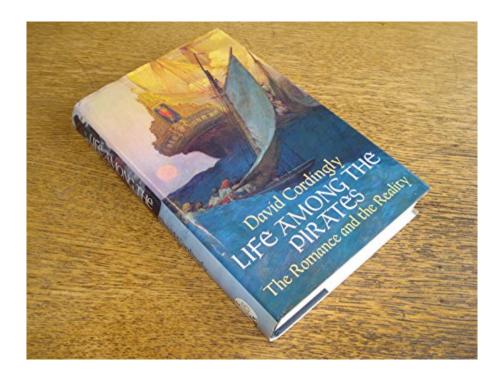


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An Informative Book, But There's One Big Problem...

By Matthew W. Quinn

David Cordingly is an internationally-recognized expert in piracy and this work is generally quite informative, but it has a major failing. He is very critical of romanticizing pirates and instead focuses on their violence and atrocities, but he only references one book by Marcus Rediker, the originator of a revisionist view that pirates were a democratic, anti-slavery revolt against the imperial systems of the time. Rediker has advanced his thesis in a journal article and three books, all of which were written well before Cordingly wrote this book, but Cordingly only used one book (written in the late 1980s) as a source.

It's like either Cordingly isn't aware of Rediker's more recent scholarship (which is pretty significant in the field of pirates, the Atlantic world, etc.) or has simply chosen to ignore it. That doesn't really reflect well on the scholarship Cordingly put into the book.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Educational But With One or Two Issues

By David Burr

While Cordingly is clearly an excellent writer, there are a couple of things with which I struggled here. The primary one is at least a bit objective, while I am admittedly subjective in the second. First- If you read this book you get the distinct impression that each chapter was written independently, without consideration that they would be compiled into a book. The amount of redundancy tells us all we need to know about that. If the work was planned as a whole, the same facts would not surface 6-8 times.

Secondly, you really have to be infected with a form of pirate-mania to want to hear endless details about every "important?" pirate book, play, or movie ever made. For me, that was just over the top. Who cares about detailed plot lines, who the actors were, and endless minutia? To be fair, the descriptions of the book, as well as the reference to "The Romance" in the title, indicates that we have not been duped - this subject would be part of the text. Personally I had no use for it. But of course since each chapter is essentially its own self-contained college term paper, not having been built on a previous one in any great sense, you can just skip ahead. Or at least go to a place where it stops talking about the media-created "pirates".

These not-so-small nits aside, you really do learn, via the authors research of public records, what pirates were all about. The book is an easy read. It would be great to get into modern-day piracy, but that would be another book because there is no way to dovetail that with this work that describes what might be called the hey-day of piracy.

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2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Insightful, Substantial, and Enjoyable By Aaron I enjoyed 'Under the Black Flag.'

The book is, first, well-written for one of its type, with a solid, straightforward narrative that gets its point across. Second, the book is satisfying, extensively researched, and substantial; I found it to offer a sound, rounded account of the classical "pirate" culture, complete with its known origins, social structure, and historical context. In the end, however, what I found most interesting is a second, deeper dimension of the book: namely, the contrast of the actual reality of the pirate and that of the popular perception of such. That is, according to what can be gleaned from the records cited by the author, the romantic, swashbuckling Hollywood pirate is largely nonexistent, being a mere construction of myth and misconception, which has then been perpetuated by storytelling, media, and a worldwide yearning for the unreal -- the cause of many discrepancies between perception and reality, as it were. Much can be learned from this example, as it can be applied throughout history and beyond, right into daily life and the modern world (or so I believe, at least); we would all do well to keep such things in mind, I think, as to help clarify our perception of the world around us (and of ourselves). In the end, I learned much from 'Under the Black Flag,' and enjoyed some good old-fashioned stories to boot (though I made sure to scrutinize even their accuracy, lest I develop mythical perceptions of my own).

My thanks goes out to this book's author, subjects, and publisher. I am grateful for, and have benefited from, your work and service.

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