

because it was, by the end of the century, less invested in compulsory vaccination, this deserves more direct treatment. Similarly, Durbach's reliance on anti-vaccinationist ephemera sometimes elides both the local and the historical, and there is sometimes insufficient sense of place or change over time. Moreover, some attention needs to be paid to how deeply invested rank-and-file anti-vaccinationists were in the movement. For example, if anti-vaccinationists were animated by a rational fear of infection and disease, did this rational calculus change when the relative risks from the disease rose?

In the closing pages, Durbach places the conscience clause in the 1907 Vaccination Act within a teleological narrative that stretches all the way to the establishment of the National Health Service, which she reads as an ultimate repudiation of coercive Poor Law policies. While it is indisputable that the anti-vaccination movement offers a useful window on popular conceptions of citizenship, Durbach's assertions that it should occupy such a *place of primacy* need to be substantiated, something which her sources cannot allow. Instead of placing the anti-vaccinationists at the centre of the grand radical narrative of the latter nineteenth century, Durbach might instead have explored the ways in which the conscience clause fragmented the movement, disclosing the range of perspectives, approaches and philosophies that girded an apparently unitary movement culture. For an engaged historian like Durbach, such an approach might have done greater justice to those whose subjectivities she seeks to recuperate.

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**Pablo Emilio Pérez-Mallaína, *Spain's Men of the Sea: Daily Life on the Indies Fleets in the Sixteenth Century*, translated by Carla Rahn Phillips, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).**

It is not common to have a work of Spanish history translated into English, while the opposite is the norm. This is not the product of collusion but rather of the more pedestrian combination of the lack of international perspective among many Spanish historians and the outright ignorance and disdain for them on the part of their English-speaking counterparts. It is, in sum, a tale of two parochial approaches to culture, of two almost mutually isolated worlds in the age of globalisation. Here we have a notable exception. Pablo E. Pérez-Mallaína's work, enhanced by an excellent translation by Professor Carla Rahn Phillips (Minneapolis) and the product of a gamble by Johns Hopkins University Press, is a good step which reveals the high quality of work done in many departments of History in Spain. Let us hope that the exception becomes the norm one day.

When reading Pérez-Mallaína's overwhelming account of the crews that

sailed between Spain and its colonies, the comment that comes to mind is: what a hard, short life it was! Behind the glory—or criminal misery, depending of one's perspective—of empire and 'discovery,' of gold, destruction, religion, genocide, military feats, etc., lay the experiences of mostly ordinary people. They were just simple sailors, men with no history or family annals. Even in these days of political correctness, there is a mesmerizing story to be told about this particular group of white European males. In this sense, *Spain's Men of the Seas* shows a refreshing concern for ordinary people, and tries, if not always with success (mostly due to the paucity of sources), to tell us their story.

These men, more often than not, could not read and could write even less frequently. Even the pilots who mastered their little boats were normally illiterate. Accordingly, the records of their lives come mostly from the endless bureaucratic documentation of the Archive of the Indies in Seville. These records were kept to document trade, licenses, disputes, organizational matters and, in sum, to ensure that some of the money made in the colonies ended up in the royal chest. It requires time and skill to extract life from all this mass of paperwork. And here Pérez-Mallaína's mastery of the records pays off. By focusing on the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the author concentrates on a period before capitalism turned men who used to see themselves mostly as free companions, or partners (although very unequal ones) in both risks and profits into simple employees and proletarians. The 16<sup>th</sup> century was in this sense an open period, during which modernity—including not only capitalism and its values but also the future hegemony of Northern Europe and its impact on our interpretation of the past—had not yet emerged triumphant.

The author has managed to present an awesome portrait of Seville where most legal trips started and theoretically ended, (smuggling, corruption, and deceit being widespread), and particularly of the seamen's neighbourhoods on the Guadalquivir River banks. He also shows how the skills acquired by northern pilots, many of them Basques, were transferred to the Atlantic experience. More important is the chapter on the economic opportunities for poor people and the risks they took in pursuit of them in a period when there were very few prospects. For sea life was hard, often brutally short and its benefits far from certain. At least, these poor men were usually allowed to carry their own merchandise to sell in the Indies, and thereby make a profit far superior to what they would earn elsewhere ... if they did not die. A dead man's meagre possessions would be auctioned among his peers and the proceedings given to his survivors back in Seville, but if cheated often in life, he would be again cheated in death for his slim salary would be lost for not fulfilling his contract. A man could die of many things: accidents at sea, (less frequently) fights, and tropical diseases that ravaged entire crews and fleets. The chances of survival were further diminished by the appalling living and hygienic conditions on board and the poor diet. Sexual encounters were predictably homosexual and being caught in

such an act carried deadly punishment. Nor were other forms of entertainment any safer; games, for example, often involved money and fights. Even the last moments of the trip, when home was nearly in sight, were dangerous, as the mouth of the Guadalquivir River, the gate to Seville from the Atlantic, was notoriously treacherous and boats suffered frequent, deadly wrecks on its sand banks.

There were compounded risks to being a man of the sea, products of the contemporary social structure and its workings. Quite often, the skills and professionalism of crews, shipmasters and pilots, learnt mostly by experience rather than by scientific education, was undermined by the sheer incompetence and corruption of the admirals responsible for the expeditions. These were royal appointees selected not for their skills at sea or organizing fleets but because of their proximity to the crown. Indeed, one of the more attractive features of this book is how it shows the social stratification of the fleets and the very different treatments and rights (or rather privileges) that its members enjoyed. Discipline and punishment were harder at the bottom of the ladder while captains, admirals, and their retinues reaped, often with legal impunity, the biggest share of legal and illegal profits. Dissent and protest were harshly punished. For the poor seaman, the only possible escape was desertion, for he had, in sum, a hard life and his hopes were limited.

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