



The Outlaw Sea: A World of Freedom, Chaos, and Crime

William Langewiesche

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Riveting stories of our last frontier and the acts of God and man upon it

Even if we live within sight of the sea, it is easy to forget that our world is an ocean world. The open ocean--that vast expanse of international waters--begins just a few miles out and spreads across three-fourths of the globe. It is a place of storms and danger, both natural and manmade. And at a time when every last patch of land is claimed by one government or another, it is a place that remains radically free.

With typically understated lyricism, William Langewiesche explores this ocean world and the enterprises--licit and illicit--that flourish in the privacy afforded by its horizons. Forty-three thousand gargantuan ships ply the open ocean, carrying nearly all the raw materials and products on which our lives are built. Many are owned or managed by one-ship companies so ghostly that they exist only on paper. They are the embodiment of modern global capital and the most independent objects on earth--many of them without allegiances of any kind, changing identity and nationality at will. Here is free enterprise at its freest, opportunity taken to extremes. But its efficiencies are accompanied by global problems--shipwrecks and pollution, the hard lives and deaths of the crews, and the growth of two perfectly adapted pathogens: a modern and sophisticated strain of piracy and its close cousin, the maritime form of the new stateless terrorism.

This is the outlaw sea--perennially defiant and untamable--that Langewiesche brings startlingly into view. The ocean is our world, he reminds us, and it is wild.

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