

Life Under the Jolly Roger

Reflections on Golden Age Piracy, Second Edition

Gabriel Kuhn

Over the last couple of decades, an ideological battle has raged over the political legacy and cultural symbolism of the “golden age” pirates who roamed the seas between the Caribbean Islands and the Indian Ocean from roughly 1690 to 1725. They are depicted as romanticized villains on the one hand and as genuine social rebels on the other. *Life Under the Jolly Roger* examines the political and cultural significance of these nomadic outlaws by relating historical accounts to a wide range of theoretical concepts—reaching from Marshall Sahlins and Pierre Clastres to Mao Zedong and Eric J. Hobsbawm via Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault. With daring theoretical speculation and passionate, respectful inquiry, Gabriel Kuhn skillfully contextualizes and analyzes the meanings of race, gender, sexuality, and disability in golden age pirate communities, while also surveying the breathtaking array of pirates’ forms of organization, economy, and ethics.

Life Under the Jolly Roger also provides an extensive catalog of scholarly references for the academic reader. Yet this delightful and engaging study is written in language that is wholly accessible for a wide audience.

This expanded second edition includes an appendix with interviews about contemporary piracy, the ongoing fascination with pirate imagery, and the thorny issue of colonial implications in the romanticization of pirates.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gabriel Kuhn is an author, translator, and union activist. He has published widely in English and German. His texts have been translated into more than a dozen languages.

ACCOLADES

“In addition to history Gabriel Kuhn’s radical piratology brings philosophy, ethnography, and cultural studies to the stark question of the time: which were the criminals—bankers and brokers or sailors and slaves? By so doing he supplies us with another case where the history isn’t dead, it’s not even past!”

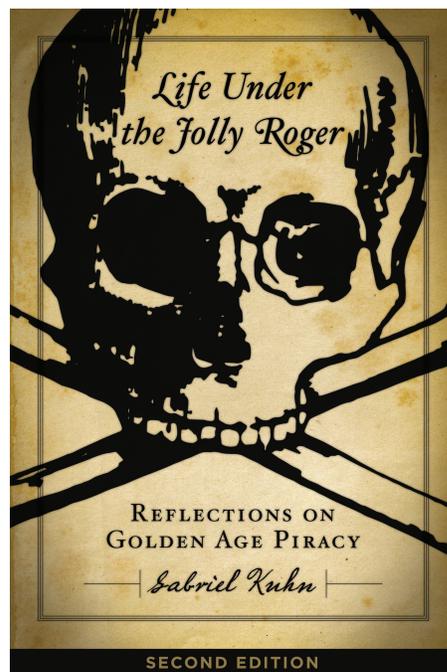
—Peter Linebaugh, author of *The London Hanged* and coauthor of *The Many-Headed Hydra*

“Gabriel Kuhn does a masterful job of, piece by piece, dismantling all the popular myths about Golden Age piracy. And then, more masterfully still, he picks up the pieces and weaves together an understanding of why, knowing what we know, we still love us some goddamn pirates.”

—Margaret Killjoy, author of *The Lamb Will Slaughter the Lion* and *The Barrow Will Send What It May*

“*Life Under the Jolly Roger* is a carefully researched account of golden age piracy that departs from the usual ideological banter. Its fresh perspective on the cultural and political implications of pirates breathes new life into dusty historical accounts, connecting them to contemporary social issues with insight and clarity. Most importantly, it offers lessons for practicing nonauthoritative and egalitarian ideals in the here and now.”

—Emily Gaarder, author of *Women and the Animal Rights Movement*



SUBJECT CATEGORY

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& Piracy/Sociology

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