Japanese decisions, such as Kurita's decision to order a "general attack" rather than forming a battle line after initially spotting Clifton Sprague's Taffy 3, are well analysed and placed into proper context.

The most controversial decisions – Halsey's decision to leave San Bernardino Strait to pursue Ozawa's carriers and Kurita's decision not to push into Leyte Gulf following the Battle off Samar – are given dedicated chapters. Stille's analysis is fair and balanced and, as such, quite compelling. He goes beyond analysis of the tactical situation and considers the personalities of the people involved, as well as the extremes of stress and exhaustion all were working under. His assessment of both decisions is quite sympathetic. His greatest criticism is reserved for Halsey, not for his decision to pursue Ozawa's force, but for his tardy response after receiving Kinkaid's distress signals that Taffy 3 was under attack.

Leyte Gulf: A New History of the World's Largest Sea Battle is probably not for the casual reader with a passing interest in the Battle of Leyte Gulf. However, those seeking a deeper dive, whether familiar with the events or a relative newcomer, will surely find something of interest in Stille's work. Highly recommended.

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Jonathan White. *Shipwrecked: A True Civil War Story of Mutinies, Jailbreaks, Blockade-Running, and the Slave Trade.* Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, www.rowman.com, 2023. 336 pp., illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. US $29.95, UK £22.99, cloth; ISBN 978-1-5381-7501-9. (E-book available.)

From the title, a reader might think the story told in this book took place almost entirely at sea, during the American Civil War, culminating in a tragic shipwreck. They would be wrong. This book covers the story of Appleton Oaksmith's life at sea, the consequences of which repeatedly left him beached. It is also about his mother, Elizabeth Oakes Smith, a poet, writer and abolitionist. She was an early feminist with a strong bias for her favourite son, Appleton. Oaksmith's father, Seba Smith, was a journalist and publisher, who quickly faded from the story.

As a young man, Oaksmith joined a merchant vessel sailing from New York to San Francisco to escape a failed relationship. He kept a detailed diary in his first years afloat, providing details of his early voyages. He also wrote a lot of poetry, some of which appears in the text. Oaksmith will not be remembered as a poet.

For the first year he sailed up and down the west coast from San Francisco to Panama City. He witnessed the effects of the devastating 1851 San Francisco fire. He purchased a share in a ship and served as captain, heading south first to Nicaragua and then on to Peru. During the second part of the voyage, some of his crew plotted to mutiny. Oaksmith and loyal crew members subdued the mutineers, putting them ashore in Peru. From Peru he sailed to Rio de Janeiro. It is here that he had his first association with a slave trader, after which he departed on a voyage to Africa. Although he takes goods to the mouth of the Congo River, he does not appear to be involved in the slave trade at this time. His vessel runs aground, and local Africans threaten to seize the ship. With the help of a British naval vessel, Oaksmith and his crew repulse the assault. He then sails for New York, returning after three years at sea. This early part of the book holds the most detailed description of his life at sea.

The majority of the book revolves around Oaksmith's involvement in the slave trade, and Abraham Lincoln's efforts to stamp out slavery and the slave trade. On the eve of the Civil War, with the decline in whaling, there were many New England ship owners who sought money by smuggling captives from Africa into slavery in Cuba or South America. Backers from New York City reaped a tidy profit from the illegal trade. Lincoln's government, most notably Secretary of State William H. Seward, wanted to stop the American participation in this trade. To that end they sought out and seized the ships, prosecuting the masters and owners. White tells the story of Captain Nathaniel Gordon who was tried in 1861 for operating a slave ship, found guilty and hanged. Gordon's fate serves as the backdrop against which White projects the rest of Oaksmith's story.

Oaksmith outfits a ship, the *Augusta*, in 1861, for what he claimed was a whaling expedition, but what the authorities saw as a slaving voyage. Imprisoned in New York City awaiting trial, he is charged with fitting out another ship for slaving, the *Margaret Scott*, in New Bedford. Oaksmith is then transferred to Boston to ensure a conviction, which was not a sure thing in New York. Found guilty of slaving in the Boston trial, Oaksmith escapes from prison before his sentencing. How he managed to decamp is unknown, although dressing as a woman might have been involved.

Oaksmith surfaced in Cuba from where American officials wanted him returned. Without an extradition treaty, Seward approved a plan to return a Cuban national living in America, wanted by authorities in Cuba, in return for the kidnapping of Oaksmith and his return to America. The capture misfires, allowing Oaksmith to escape once again. He next appears in the Deep South at the close of the Civil War under the name Captain John McDonald. After the war, Oaksmith secured a divorce from his first wife and married his cousin. He only told his wife six months later, at which time he took their three children

from her.

Oaksmith moved his new wife and children to London, England, where he worked various jobs, secured British citizenship, and struggled with debt. In 1871, Oaksmith and family returned to America settling in Morehead, North Carolina. He was elected to the state legislature, speaking against the Klan and supporting the rights of African Americans.

Woven into this story of Oaksmith's escape from jail, life in exile and his return are the efforts of his mother, Elizabeth, to clear her son's name. She sought clemency for him from every sitting president during the course of his remaining life. None of her efforts bore fruit. One major blow came from Appleton's first wife, who got her cold revenge by personally relating the story of her abandonment to President Andrew Johnson, then considering Oaksmith's clemency. At times Elizabeth's story overwhelms that of her son, becoming the central focus of the book. Indeed, after the early sea-going experiences, his time afloat is passed over without much detail. The book drifts away from being the story of a mariner.

The sea held one last punishment for Appleton. While out cruising in Bogue Sound, his small sailboat was driven under by a strong wind. His three daughters, who were with him, drowned, while he and his son survived. This tragedy broke his spirit; he never recovered. He died in 1887. He received a well-attended funeral with Masonic honours, while his mother died alone and was buried in the presence of only the grave diggers.

The twenty-seven illustrations in the book are of the various people and places mentioned within the text, and add a welcomed visual element. Appendix 1 is a family tree for the Oaksmiths, while Appendix 2 relates the tales of two other ships, taken as slave ships, in which Oaksmith may have been involved, though the evidence is thin. The "selected sources" provides a thorough list of archival material and published primary sources, with the word "selected" appearing to apply to the secondary sources consulted for the book.

Although the book is not quite what the title suggests, it does provide an interesting look into the efforts to stop the outfitting of slave ships in the northeast, in particular New York City and Boston, during the Civil War. White's discussion of Lincoln's choice not to interfere in court decisions and Seward's focused effort to bring Oaksmith to justice are important additions to the historiography.

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