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Klein Käfer, Natacha, ed. *Privacy at Sea: Practices, Spaces and Communication in Maritime History*

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For some, early modern seafaring evokes a romantic notion of freedom and discovery. Many maritime scholars, however, have traditionally approached seafaring by focusing primarily on the destinations of early modern voyages. More recently, studies have increasingly examined oceans and ports as social maritime spaces governed by rules and practices distinct from those on land. In this context, the ship in all its forms represents the exact opposite of the romanticized idea of freedom: on a confined wooden vessel in the middle of the vast oceans, people were confronted above all with the limits of their personal freedom and the vulnerability of their privacy.

In this edited volume, Natacha Klein Käfer, Assistant Professor at the Centre for Privacy Studies at the University of Copenhagen, explores together with fourteen other contributors the concept of privacy at sea and how it was experienced by contemporaries. The Palgrave Macmillan series Global Studies in Social and Cultural Maritime History is a very well-fitting platform for those case studies. The series situates maritime history within a global, social and cultural context, going beyond traditional economic, political, and military perspectives. It encompasses different maritime and coastal spaces from antiquity to the present, with a particular emphasis on work with gendered, postcolonial and global perspectives. Thus, Klein Käfer's volume examines the early modern period in its full range (1500–1800) and focuses on the global maritime spheres of predominantly Southern European nations, alongside a few Anglophone case studies.

The volume is organized around an in-depth exploration of privacy at sea. Its introduction provides a rigorous theoretical framework within privacy studies, while the case studies are grouped into four thematic sections. Each section presents three detailed case studies, followed by a concluding epilogue (Part V) by Klein Käfer and Mette Birkedal Bruun, which integrates the results

into the theoretical framework and synthesizes them into a cohesive conclusion. This structure allows the volume to illustrate how sailors actively created, defended, or negotiated privacy through social, political, legal, economic, and cultural practices aboard ships and in ports (2). Some boundaries of privacy were physical and seemingly stable (for example, ship cabins), while others, such as codified behaviors, were ephemeral and intangible, shaped by human interactions, social codes, agreements, and individual decisions (376).

“Privacy, Race, and Gender” (Part I) examines how privacy conferred power to Black sailors, showing how property or theft could both secure and threaten personal freedom. On the other hand, Polónia and Capelão note that for (unauthorized) women on board, privacy often amounted to “captivity, compulsive isolation, and constant surveillance” (72). Silva Perez illustrates how intimate and private relationships between owners and their Black slaves could develop and how transatlantic voyages could endanger these bonds. “The Private Under the Public Eye” (Part II) explores how intimate moments could be created and experienced in public spaces. These include corners repurposed for privacy (such as galleys or the bow) or the body itself as the most intimate boundary and marker of belonging or distinction (378). Beck, through cases of mental illness, presents the dynamics of ship crews as “noticing but not *taking* notice,” showing how crew members decided whether they had observed and remembered certain events (125). LeJacq highlights how privacy and closed doors could foster mistrust by provoking sodomy trials, while Schadner provides a noteworthy analysis of tattoos as “objects of privacy” (11). “Politics, Communications, and Intelligence” (Part III), with contributions by Araújo, Ceccarelli, and Pizzorno, focuses on privacy as “private matters of state,” demonstrating how secrecy worked as a tool to preserve sensitive information. This section shows how systems of privacy and private communication aboard ships operated between secrecy, diplomacy, and trade through codes, intimate human connections, and obscure practices which were not always successful. Pizzorno concludes with a perspective on intelligence and secrecy, emphasizing the significance of absence of sources and how secret state communication remained unrecorded. The final section, “Legal, Military, and Religious Perspectives from the Sea to the Shore,” with contributions by Humanes, Aguilera-López, and Bakić, highlights how structures at sea and on shore shaped social norms, cultural encounters, and practices of privacy, illustrating the interplay of conflict, cooperation, mobility, and spatial control.

The volume offers new interpretations and insights into privacy that might not be immediately apparent. While enclosed spaces at sea allowed opportunities for illicit or improper behavior and were indeed

viewed with suspicion on land, privacy was taken seriously aboard ships and relied on trust and loyalty. The private spaces that emerged on board were shaped by the tension between the rigid hierarchies, norms, legally defined structures governing maritime life, and the sense of anarchy brought about by the constant internal and external dangers faced at sea. Klein Käfer's particularly detailed introduction allows readers to gain a good understanding of the contributions and their place in the broader field of privacy studies even before reading the case studies. Without this framing, the integration of the case studies into the broader context might be lost. This highlights the volume's structure, which contextualizes, organizes, and synthesizes nine detailed, source-based studies through the introduction and conclusion. Through this organization, the authors illuminate privacy as experienced by people at sea. Notably, the volume not only includes a dedicated section on race, class, and gender, addressing long-neglected aspects of maritime research, but also demonstrates how gender and class issues permeate all contributions, illustrating the intersections between gender and postcolonial studies. While it is unfortunate that francophone case studies are absent, this gap provides a motivation for future research.

Overall, the volume offers a state-of-the-art theoretical framework for privacy studies and demonstrates how concrete maritime case studies can be situated within and applied to this framework. Though the case studies are highly specific, they provide points of departure for further research and the expansion of perspectives and sources. The volume thus unites contemporary work in privacy and maritime studies with concrete applications for gender and postcolonial studies, addressing a broad spectrum of scholarly inquiry.

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**Knight, Katherine. *Boat*
Goose Lane Editions, 2025**

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There is something both satisfying and magical about a model boat and the material history of the sea, because, perhaps, full-size vessels are a little difficult to store and preserve. Model boats are found in the grave goods of pharaohs and the burial mounds of Viking chiefs. Examples in nautical museums are usually exquisitely detailed and a delight to behold and are a continuing draw in museum exhibits of the sea and ships. However, Katherine Knight's book