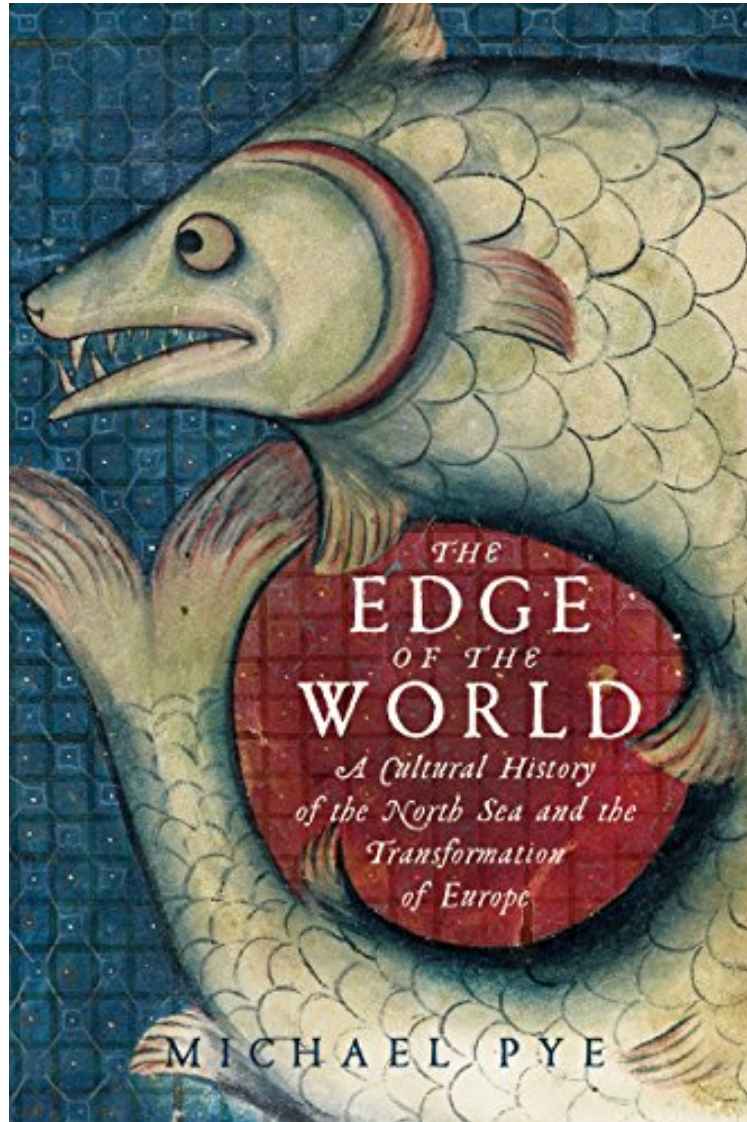


(Ebook pdf) The Edge of the World: A Cultural History of the North Sea and the Transformation of Europe

The Edge of the World: A Cultural History of the North Sea and the Transformation of Europe

Michael Pye

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Michael Pye : The Edge of the World: A Cultural History of the North Sea and the Transformation of Europe before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Edge of the World: A Cultural History of the North Sea and the Transformation of Europe:

120 of 121 people found the following review helpful. Lively Events in the so-called Dark Ages! By Eric C. Petersen One book where I think the dust jacket reviews nailed it rather well. Two chosen at random: "An utterly

beguiling journey into the dark ages of the North Sea. A complete revelation. Pye writes like a dream." Or another one: "A brilliant history of the Dark Ages showing the growth and development of science, business, fashion, law, politics and other significant institutions - a joy to read and reread." The period between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance that the author puts from roughly 700 CE to 1400 has traditionally been seen as a period of human stagnation - the Dark Ages. As the author shows in endless intriguing anecdotes from the era, the area surrounding the Baltic and North Seas was a very lively place. This isn't a typical political history of kings and armies, rather more of a ground-level view of what people were up to in their daily lives, how they interacted with each other on not only a local level, but more importantly, in trade and business; the tale of the Hanseatic League is fascinating - the first international trading cartel, and one with no home address. The amount of research done by the author is staggering - and what makes it so much fun to read; where and how he managed to dig up the documents, personal correspondence and other material used in the book would probably make a book in itself, and draws the reader into personal communication with individuals and an appreciation of "what was in the wind" at the time. Pye also has a sly and at times wicked sense of humor. A fun and very informative book. 81 of 85 people found the following review helpful. Enlightening and Informative, But Lacks The Rigor That Would Have Made It Terrific By Anne Mills The premise of this book -- that the regions around the North Sea contributed much more to European culture than is generally recognized -- is a fascinating one. Indeed, I found it so fascinating that I ordered the book from the UK before it was available in the States. In terms of the author's subject matter, I was not disappointed. He does indeed examine local cultures that usually pass below the historical radar, most notably Frisia in the early middle ages, but also Flanders under the Dukes of Burgundy, and the Hansa. And he does argue convincingly that these cultures had an impact on the modernization of European culture. And, he does tell many interesting stories, and introduce many interesting people. Why then only four stars? First and foremost, Pye seems to me to overstate the strength of an overriding North Sea culture, and to overstate its impact on European history. The cultures of the Low Countries and those of Scandinavia were all trading cultures, but that doesn't make them the same thing. Nor, for me at least, does their financial orientation explain the monetization of European culture nearly as much as Pye suggests -- what about Italian banking? There is a great deal in this book, but not perhaps as much as the author implies. Secondly, as another reviewer suggests, the book is repetitive. Finally, the arguments are not always tight, and some subjects seem to be introduced simply because they are of interest, not because they have that much to do with the subject at hand. Those who are interested in emergence of European culture, particularly in its earlier phases, are likely to enjoy this book. But be prepared to take it with a grain of salt, and be prepared to skim. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. I thought this would be dry. Wonderful read! By Aldis I thought this would be about each place and people around the northern sea; instead it was a much richer read about how the concepts of money, measurement, writing, mathematics began or were further developed by these cultures. The author shows how, sometimes, tiny ideas or inventions revolutionize the world. I was not interested in economics, (or so I thought), until this book. Many parts read like a novella, and the author follows historical personages and their influences which illustrated his points. I very much enjoyed the history/economic lessons here - now I am going to see what else the author has written.....

A New York Times Notable Book An epic adventure ranging from the terror of the Vikings to the golden age of cities: Michael Pye tells the amazing story of how modernity emerged on the shores of the North Sea. Saints and spies, pirates and philosophers, artists and intellectuals: they all criss-crossed the grey North Sea in the so-called "dark ages," the years between the fall of the Roman Empire and the beginning of Europe's mastery over the oceans. Now the critically acclaimed Michael Pye reveals the cultural transformation sparked by those men and women: the ideas, technology, science, law, and moral codes that helped create our modern world. This is the magnificent lost history of a thousand years. It was on the shores of the North Sea where experimental science was born, where women first had the right to choose whom they married; there was the beginning of contemporary business transactions and the advent of the printed book. In *The Edge of the World*, Michael Pye draws on an astounding breadth of original source material to illuminate this fascinating region during a pivotal era in world history. 16 pages of BW photographs

Bristling, wide-ranging and big-themed. At its most meaningful, history involves a good deal of art and storytelling. Pye's book is full of both. An exuberant amalgam of sources. A fruitful way of reorienting our thinking about the past. By bringing back to life a mostly forgotten cast of medieval shippers, marauders, thinkers and tinkers, Pye challenges us to consider how we got to be where and who we are. - *The New York Times Book* As Michael Pye shows us in *The Edge of the World*, the people living around the North Sea were crucial to the birth of a new Europe. Pye, like a scholarly magpie, picks up his glittering bits from the most up-to-date academic research. - Michael Dirda, *The Washington Post* A lively account. Pye's vivid prose proves that this time was anything but dark. - *Explorer's Journal* Beautifully written and thoughtfully researched. For anyone, like this reviewer, who is tired of medieval history as a chronicle of kings and kingdoms, knights and ladies, monks and heretics, *The Edge of the World* provides a welcome respite. - *The Wall Street Journal* A double pleasure, first for its unique, illuminating vision of a time largely unknown and misunderstood by modern readers, but even more for its exemplary prose. Pye's writing is vigorous and

precise, the work of a writer who revels in his subject and who nurses a fondness for its many curious byways and paradoxes. - Dallas Morning News Novelist, journalist and historian Pye challenges all our notions of the Dark Ages and shows the vast accomplishments completed long before the Renaissance. A brilliant history of the Dark Ages showing the growth and development of science, business, fashion, law, politics and other significant institutions a joy to read and reread. - Kirkus s (starred review) Historian Pye excels at painting a unique portrait of the political, economic, and cultural transformation that has occurred on the shores of the North Sea. Pyes message and intention provides the reader with a refreshing view of the connection between time and place. His frequent use of primary sources as well as fictional literary works gives the work an ethereal nature. Readers who enjoy broad historical analysis will enjoy this book as a companion to Lincoln Paines *The Sea and Civilization* and David Bates and Robert Liddiards *East Anglia and its North Sea World in the Middle Ages*. - Library Journal Mr. Pye draws on a dizzying array of documentary and archaeological scholarship, which he works together in surprising ways. Mr. Pye advances on several fronts at once, following the overlapping currents of customary, religious and empirical ways of thinking. He writes about difficult concepts with vivid details and stories, often jump-cutting from exposition to drama like a film. Its complicated, but fun. - The Economist No more of the tired old attribution of europes glories to italian city states or germanic empires; its around the shore of the North Sea that Michael Pye sees the slow but decisive emergence of our modern world. Utterly readable. - Neal Ascherson, bestselling author of *Black Sea* From a new perspective on the Vikings to an examination of information as a form of currency, Pyes book offers an engaging and enlightening look at a little understood time and place. - The Columbus Dispatch An utterly beguiling journey into the dark ages of the north sea. A complete revelation. Pye writes like a dream. Magnificent. - Jerry Brotton, author of *A HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN TWELVE MAPS* Splendid. A heady mix of social, economic, and intellectual history, written in an engaging style. It offers a counterpoint to the many studies of the Mediterranean, arguing for the importance of the North Sea. Exciting, fun, and informative. - Michael Prestwich, Professor of History, Durham University Takes readers on a far-ranging tour of Europe during the Dark Ages. Pyes style is leisurely yet authoritative, scholarly but engaging; his approach resembles that of a docent leading a group through a vast museum, with each section devoted to a different aspect of society. An eye-opening reexamination of the era, and delightfully accessible. - Publishers Weekly Michael Pye has a great journalist's eye for a story and the telling anecdote as well as a great historian's ability to place it in the bigger picture. Here he fuses those talents in a hugely eclectic study of the very first stirrings of modernity in northern Europe. - Alexander McCall Smith, New York Times bestselling author of *THE NO. 1 LADIES' DETECTIVE AGENCY* A closely-researched and fascinating characterization of the richness of life and the underestimated interconnections of the peoples all around the medieval and early modern North Sea. A real page-turner. - Chris Wickham, author of *THE INHERITANCE OF ROME: A HISTORY OF EUROPE FROM 400 TO 1000* For more than a millennium, the North Sea was our trading floor and our internet. Yet this connection, this period, and this sea remain wrapped in fog. With elegant writing and extraordinary scholarship, Pye does a rare but important thing by focusing not on lands but on the waters that unite them. - Hugh Aldersey-Williams, author of *PERIODIC TALES* and *ANATOMY* Persuasive and eloquent. A radical perspective on the modern world. No book I have read has looked at the available evidence in the way it is presented here. A multilayered, complicated, dense book that demands time to be read and be digested but rewards by giving one plenty to chew on. - The Observer (UK) A treasure chest. [Pye] breaks most of the rules of scholarly history, but who cares? The end result is brilliantly illuminating. Pyes creativity brings light to this once dark time. - The Times (London) A pleasure. I learned a great deal and enjoyed it enormously. - Carolyn Larrington, St. John's College, Oxford Brilliant. Pye is a wonderful historian . . . bringing history to life like no one else. - Terry Jones Excellent. *The Edge of the World* does what good non-fiction should, in making the reader see the world in a different light. - Scotland on Sunday The amazing story of how the North Sea made us who we are. A dazzling historical adventure. - The Daily Telegraph It is the measure of Pyes achievement that he can breathe life into the traders of seventh-century Frisia or the beguines of late-medieval Flanders as well as into his more celebrated subjects. Hugely enjoyable. Grey the waters of the North Sea may be; but Pye has successfully dyed them with a multitude of rich colors. - The Guardian This is the kind of book that can open up new vistas. An inspiring book, full of surprises. - The Independent A compelling account of societies around the North Sea will make you see the world in a different light. - The Scotsman Extraordinary. Astonishing. The end result is brilliantly illuminating. Pyes creativity brings light to this once dark time. - The Times Saturday A masterly storyteller. - Vogue (London) About the Author Michael Pye is the author of *The Drowning Room* and *The Pieces from Berlin*, which were both New York Times Notable Books of the Year. He won various prizes in Modern History at Oxford before working as a journalist, columnist, and broadcaster in London and New York. He now divides his time between London and rural Portugal.