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The Master Mariner: Running Proud

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8. These facts have to be analyzed by each person for himself . . .

Linebacker II, one of the USAF's Southeast Asia monographs, is an excellent account of men at war, complete with vignettes of individual participation and even transcripts of radio and intercom transmissions over downtown Hanoi. It is a testimonial to the leadership, courage, loyalty and comradeship of the men of the Strategic Air Command and an important piece of the Vietnam puzzle that someday will all be put together.

R. CRAYTON
Captain, U.S. Navy

Monsarrat, Nicholas. *The Master Mariner: Running Proud*. New York: Morrow, 1978. 524pp.

Twenty-seven years after the *The Cruel Sea*, perhaps the finest maritime novel of World War II, Nicholas Monsarrat writes once more of the sea. This time, however, his scope is nothing less than a fictional history of British seafaring. *The Master Mariner: Running Proud* is the first of two volumes of this audacious and generally successful effort.

The main weakness of the book is partly a result of Monsarrat's scheme to tie the 400-year history together. His protagonist, Matthew Lawe, is a fairly ordinary British seaman whose act of cowardice during Drake's engagement with the Spanish Armada, combined with a witch's curse, dooms him to sail the seas indefinitely, until his sin is expurgated. Thus Lawe never ages, never dies, and really never develops as a character through the first 200 years encompassed by the novel. As a result, unlike *The Cruel Sea* (or even Monsarrat's excellent *The Kappillan of Malta*, his fictional recounting of the World War II siege of Malta), there is no achievement here in the portrayal of the main character's personal struggle. Instead, the novel's success and appeal lie in Monsarrat's dramatic and moving recreation of great British seafaring events, and in the portraits of the men

responsible for them. We voyage not only with Drake, but with Henry Hudson in his last attempt to find the Northwest Passage, with Capt. James Cook on his navigation of the St. Lawrence River to take General Wolfe to the siege of Quebec, with Cook in his later voyage into the South Pacific, and eventually with Nelson in his great triumphs and death. Although some of these episodes can't by themselves be as good as the books they summarize or highlight—Southey's *Life of Nelson*, for example, or Esquemeling's *Buccaneers of America*, for Lawe also sails as a pirate with Henry Morgan in the Caribbean—others are probably better. In any case, each is suitably dramatic and often moving. Certainly the account of the Spanish Armada that begins the book gives a good sense of the stakes involved in that battle, while the account of Nelson's death at Trafalgar ending the book has emotional power second to none. At the same time, one gets a good feeling for the typical life of a British seaman: his suffering, occasional heroism and, especially, his pleasures.

Thus, while this novel cannot be put in the class of a unified literary epic, and while it is clearly meant for a popular audience, it is nonetheless well worth reading. As a relatively brief and highly palatable recounting of this particular era of British maritime history, it is probably unsurpassed. When the second volume appears in a few years, that history will be complete. From the proposed title of that second volume, *Darken Ship*, it seems that Nicholas Monsarrat believes the great age of British seafaring is essentially over.

ROBERT SHENK
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Nuechterlein, Donald E. *National Interests and Presidential Leadership; The Setting of Priorities*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1978. 346pp.

As suggested by the title, this work comprises a suggestion to return to