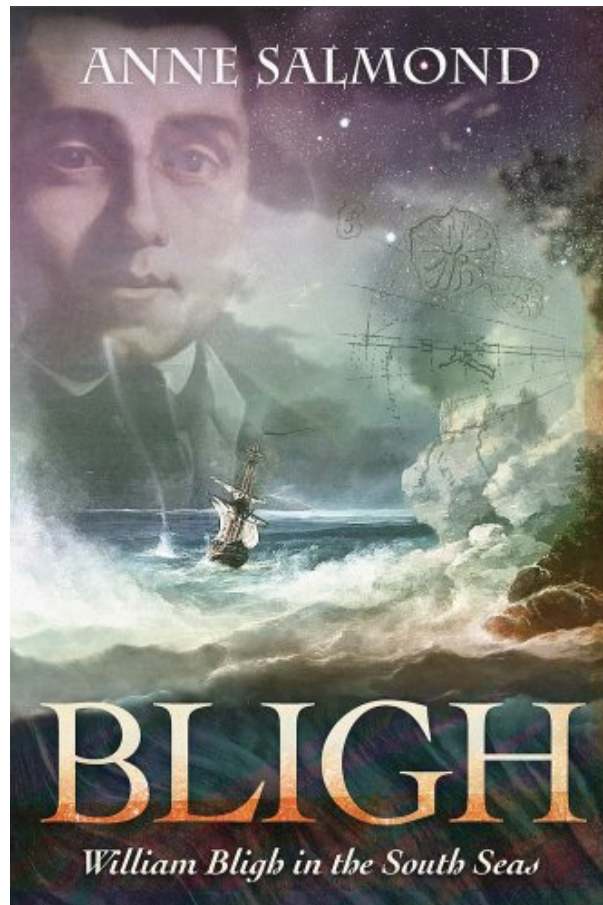
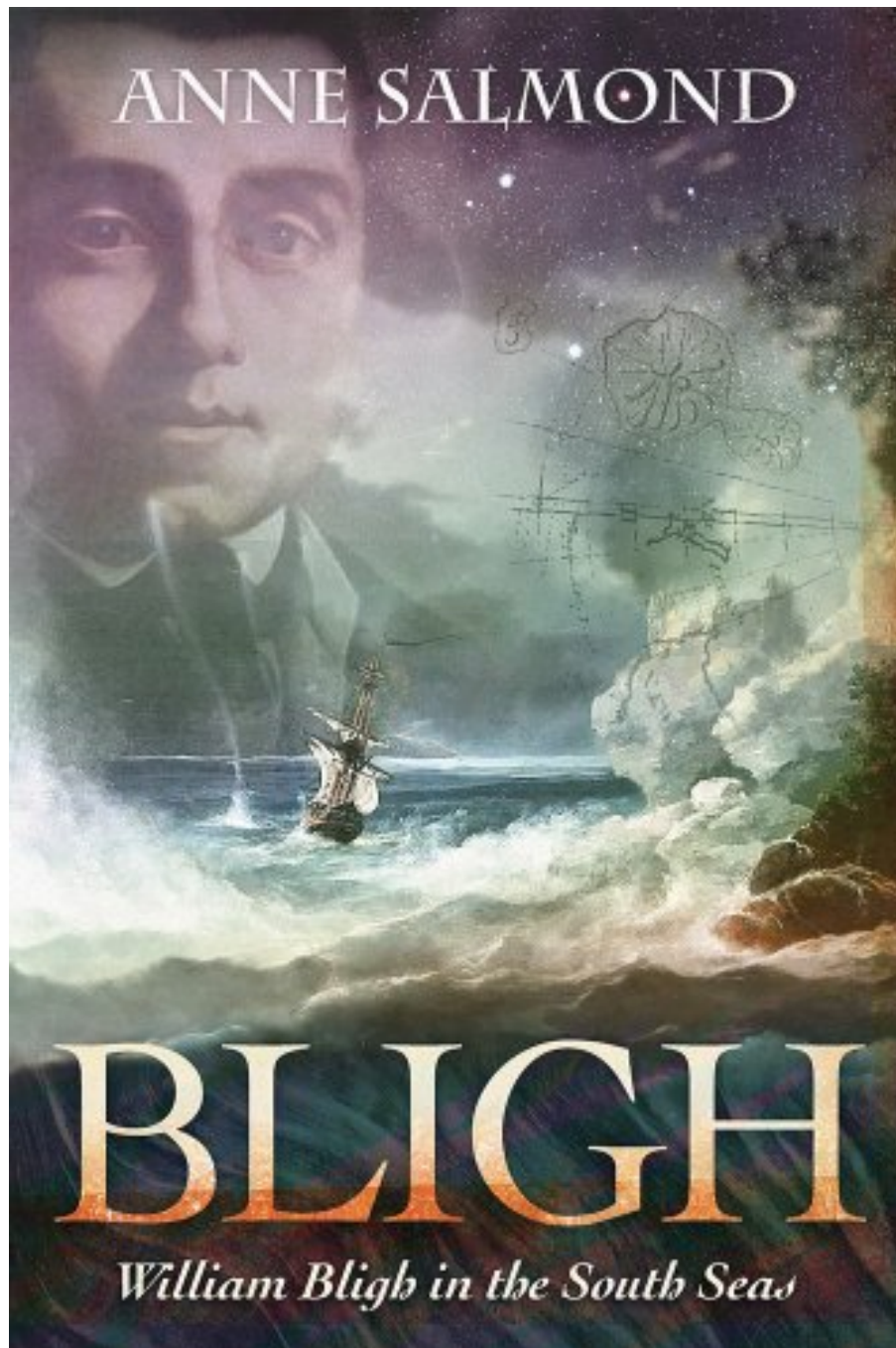


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In *Bligh*, the story of the most notorious of all Pacific explorers is told through a new lens as a key episode in the history of the world, rather than simply of the West. Award-winning anthropologist Anne Salmond recounts with a fresh perspective the triumphs and disasters of William Bligh's life in a riveting narrative that for the first time portrays the Pacific islanders as players. Beginning in 1777, when Bligh, at twenty-two, first arrived in Tahiti with Captain Cook, Salmond charts Bligh's three Pacific voyages—and tells how they transformed lives on the islands as well as on board the ships and back in Europe. She sheds new insight into the mutiny aboard the *Bounty*—and on Bligh's remarkable 3,000-mile journey across the Pacific in a small boat—through revelations from the raw, unguarded letters between him and his wife Betsy. This beautifully told story reveals Bligh for the first time, as an important ethnographer adding to the paradoxical legacy of this famed seaman, and it captures more definitively than ever the excitement, drama, and terror of these events.

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Iron Men In Wooden Ships

By dream factory

These were heroic times; in America they were swearing in a President! In France they were storming the Bastille. In the middle of the Pacific a legend was born.

Captain William Bligh. Here presented wonderfully and fairly by Anne Salmond. Telling us not only of the heroics of that small boat in the middle of that gigantic ocean, but building the foundation of the events which transpired. Bringing us the microcosm of the British society and what came together which led up to the mutiny, and what transpired afterwards.

Why did Christian revolt? Was Bligh really that tyrannical? Cook proved to be a lot meaner and had no issues with his crews. Bligh did make it back to Britain in an unbelievable 47 day, 3600 mile voyage in a small boat. While with time the mutineers settled on Pitcairn island and turned upon one another, Only one survived. Edward Christian, a lawyer defended the captured bunch of mutineers. Some hung, others excused. Life in Polynesia.

Who was Bligh? Who was Christian? What were the times which fostered this mutiny? The book is beautifully composed. An interesting and fantastic story written with depth and great interpretation.

10 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

Reassessing a Legend

By Rob Hardy

When I first opened *Bligh: William Bligh in the South Seas* (University of California Press), I went to the index to learn what it said about the Bligh I know. Marlon Brando was not listed, nor was Trevor Howard; the two had played Fletcher Christian and Bligh in the 1962 movie *Mutiny on the Bounty*. Clark Gable and Charles Laughton were not there for their roles in the 1935 movie. Not even Nordhoff and Hall were listed as the authors of the famous trilogy of books based on the mutiny. It was a bit of a surprise that within this big book's 500 pages there is little account of, or even commentary upon, the mutiny as it has most recently been presented to us, but as I read through, I realized that these sources of legend had no place in Anne Salmond's fine biography. She does allude to how the image of Bligh as sadistic commander has come down to us, but she gives authoritative evidence that the image is wrong. Bligh was a mix of high degrees of good and bad traits, and it seems as if circumstances conspired against him in the mutiny, and afterwards against his reputation. Salmond is a professor in New Zealand, and has written books about the discovery of Tahiti and about Captain James Cook, subjects essential to understanding Bligh. He is presented here in as full a picture as anyone is ever going to be able to draw, and there is much about the British and Tahitian cultures of the time, so that the context of the legend and the facts behind it can be better understood.

Bligh tended to get along well with the islanders his ships visited, and had a better understanding of them than any European of the time. He had a devoted wife and adored his two daughters. Bligh was not a flogging captain, or at least not as much as Cook and far less than other captains. Salmond even goes into statistics which show that he "flogged his men less often than almost any other British commander in the Pacific during this period." The movies get this wrong, probably because it is easy to show the brutality of the punishment, which was, of course, standard in the British navy at the time. His difficulty was that Bligh had interpersonal problems and would go on tirades with little provocation. One observer called these "violent tornadoes of temper," and Bligh might inexcusably belittle officers while their subordinates could hear, making accusations of incompetence or cowardice. After such a show, it mattered little that his rage would be short lived or that he would do the victim a kindness or ask him to dinner immediately thereafter.

Salmond is careful to show that the Admiralty compounded the difficulty with the ship's overcrowding, lack of marines, and misscheduling which required a long Tahitian stay that undermined discipline. Originally, upon his return to England, Bligh had been celebrated as a hero; the Admiralty and the British government did not want his overthrow to remind their populace that Frenchmen at the time were busily overthrowing their own royalty. Some of the returned mutineers escaped hanging because of some clever legal work by law professor Edward Christian, brother of Fletcher. Edward Christian wrote an account of the mutiny, with a sadistic Bligh harassing an intimidated crew, and the Romanticists lapped it up. Fletcher Christian was sanctified as a freedom-loving hero, and Bligh was vilified as a symbol of despotic rule.

And there they remain today, in popular culture. Salmond's perceptive volume expands the tragedy of Bligh and the tragedy of the mutineers and gives insight into nautical power-broking and patronage as well as Bligh's astute observations of Polynesian culture when it was mysterious and unspoiled. Bligh's name has come down to us as synonymous with brutality, but Salmond admonishes us that it is all only "a triumph of rhetoric over reality." The rhetoric has continued to triumph for over two hundred years, and her book deserves to be the work that brings the reality back.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Bligh- A more complete understanding of the man

By James J.

With all the books available on Bligh, Ms. Salmond expands the general knowledge in depth and detail giving an insight to Bligh's strength of character, his flaws, and the experiences which shaped and formed his opinions which became his realities. A remarkable report which paints a more complete picture of the man, and of the important cultural traits in Polynesia of which he became not only familiar, but shaped his interactions with these people.

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