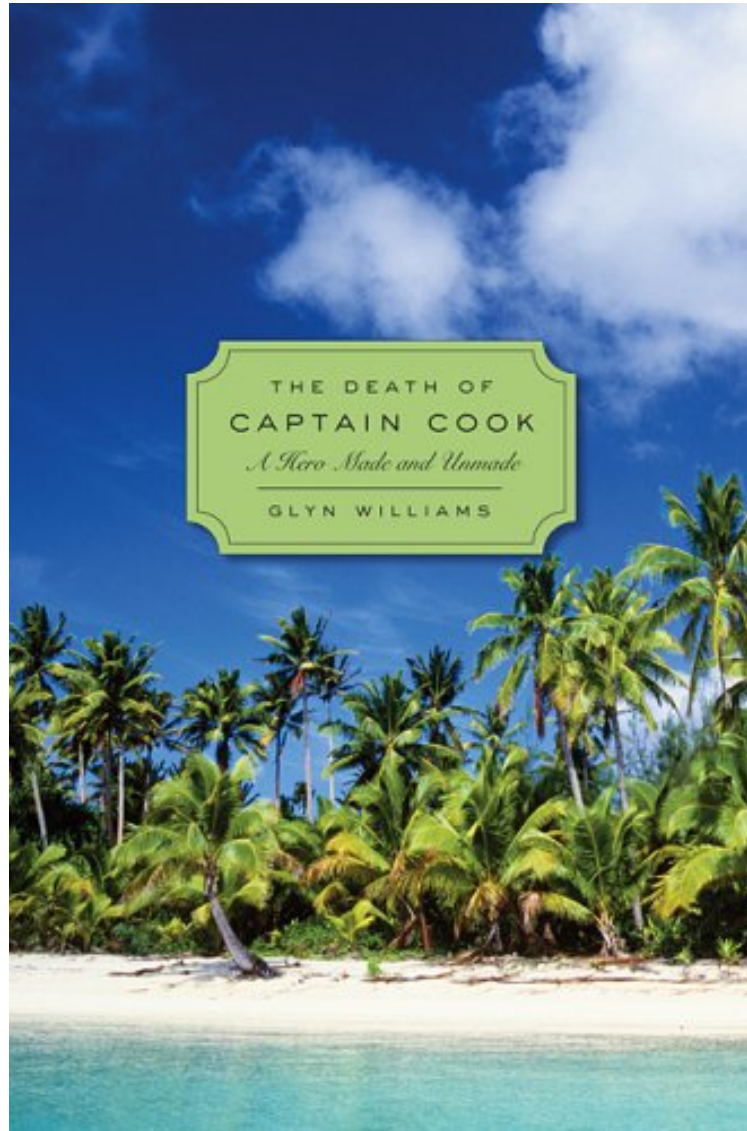


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The Death of Captain Cook: A Hero Made and Unmade (Profiles in History)

Glyn Williams

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Glyn Williams : The Death of Captain Cook: A Hero Made and Unmade (Profiles in History) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Death of Captain Cook: A Hero Made and Unmade (Profiles in History):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Captain Cook the Questions that Surround his LegacyBy Loves the ViewI first became aware of the controversy surrounding the death of Captain Cook in reading Blue Latitudes: Boldly

Going Where Captain Cook Has Gone Before a few years ago. In it, Tony Horwitz describes how, on his third voyage, Cook displayed behavior that was not characteristic of his first two expeditions. He gave instances of an increase of tension with his crew, some questionable decisions and uncharacteristic interactions with native peoples. Whether he was tired, stressed or depressed, it came to a head on the Island of Hawai'i on February 14, 1779. Glyn Williams discusses the questions that surround the navigator's death. Why was this man, presumed to be a god, killed by former worshippers? Why do we not know the facts of what happened? Cook meticulously kept a log and when there was time he prepared two journals, one for the admiralty and another to be used for popular publication. Why does writing cease on January 17? Early publications of Cook's journals purported to be his own words, but Williams gives examples of editing to increase the sensationalism of his findings and give Cook an all-knowing heroic posture. Could there have been a cover up of the events leading up to the stabbing death by Cook, himself, or others with an interest in maintaining Cook's image? Williams reports on and quotes from eye-witnesses, some from written documents of the crew, and some from Hawaiians who had been present that day as reported by later explorers. Williams discusses how Cook has been both tarnished and extolled. We write of the differing perceptions of Cook in the colonial and post-colonial periods. This book documents a lot about Cook and the documentation can be like reading a list (this is not a page turner). For instance, the chapter "An Enlightenment Hero" gives page after page of citations and tributes, along with some reports of the fatal day. Sometimes the documentation gets in the way of clarity. For instance in the detailed report of the abrupt ending of Cook's log and journals, you learn in great detail how Cook kept records, the use of nautical versus civil time, and the dates that each ended. For the date of death, the fact that actually shows how long this lapse in the log actually is, have to flip pages to find. Sometimes, the author is just sloppy. An example on p.141 when he speaks of a growing 20th century trend in Australia that celebrates Cook and a simultaneous "excitement when every few years when a book appears that challenges Cook's assumed priority from an ever-growing group of Portuguese, Spanish, French and Chinese navigators." In the next paragraph he writes about a "similar" trend in New Zealand but only talks of the adulation and says there are no competing heroes. I would have given it 3 stars for the above noted weaknesses. But this is not an "average" book so it deserves more recognition. The author assembles important information, but if you are not interested in Cook already, this will not inspire you. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Dry and dull. By Eddy. Like the reviewer above I can say this is no page turner. What it is instead is a presentation of facts in chronological order detailing the controversy/mystery around Cook's death. Unlike the reviewer above however, I see no need to give it four stars for its well researched presentation of facts, because it is a terribly dry and dull book to read. To me, this book doesn't even make it to average. It is an absolute bore whether or not you're interested in Cook. If not for the meticulous fact digging, this book would be a one star, no question. Basically, if you like reading history as a presentation of facts, then you'll probably like this book. If however, you like history written well, interesting, and with a narrative that brings out the personalities of those being written about - you will find yourself frustrated to the point of no return if you read this book.

Since first reported to the world in 1780, the death of Captain Cook on a Hawaiian beach the previous year has been revered, celebrated, and shrouded in mystery. Simultaneously called a hero and an antihero, a ruthless invader, and a torchbearer of the Enlightenment, Cook's reputation grew as much out of the moving story of his death as out of his adventures while he lived. In a style that is more detective story than conventional biography, Glyn Williams explores the multiple narratives of Cook's death. He reveals how the British Admiralty first attempted to censor accounts of Cook's erratic behavior and how the authorized version of his death a lengthy narrative serialized in the leading publications of the day reduced the story to the final hours of a noble leader who gave his life to save others. Williams argues that the contrary evidence of a chaotic bloody fracas on the beach at Kealahou Bay was ignored, and that the unexplained disappearance of Cook's own journal helped the process of concealment. He believes that Cook was not entirely the man sanctified by the British public. More than two hundred years later, an explosive interplay between academic controversy and nationalist feelings has once more drawn attention to a life that has attracted praise and controversy, abhorrence and admiration. In short, Williams examines the story of Cook's progress from obscurity to fame and, eventually, to infamy a story that, until now, has never been fully told.

From Booklist Williams posits that Captain Cook's enduring claim to fame is that he redrew the map of the world. In three voyages he transformed Europe's incomplete knowledge of the Pacific. Sailing thousands of miles across what was then the largely uncharted ocean that covered almost one-third of the earth's surface, he mapped the land from New Zealand in the south to Hawaii in the north on a scale and with the kind of detail no previous voyager had done. In early 1780, news reached England that Cook had been killed on a beach in Hawaii the previous February. Williams writes that my interpretation of Cook breaks new ground as I argue that the circumstances and reporting of his death are the key to his reputation. The book is an intriguing study of a fascinating subject. --George Cohen The book is an intriguing study of a fascinating subject. (George Cohen Booklist 2008-12-01) About the Author Glyn Williams is Emeritus Professor of History at Queen Mary University of London.