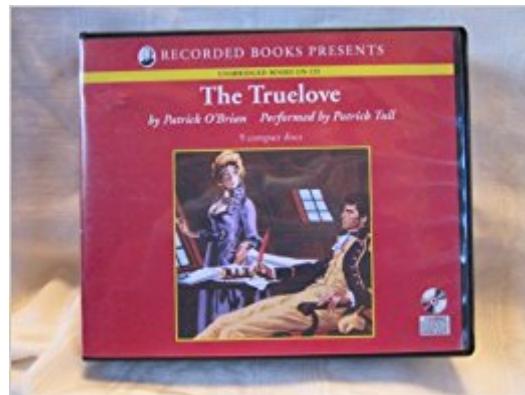


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The Truelove



Synopsis

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Book Information

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Customer Reviews

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This 15th in the O'Brian series about unlikely friends Capt. Aubrey and Dr. Maturin during the Napoleonic period continues the tradition of the others in the series. It displays the author's encyclopedic knowledge of the world of that era, both seagoing and by land. It also is intricately plotted with an auxiliary character, Clarissa, supplying the missing piece of an espionage puzzle that has occupied Dr. Maturin for the previous 6 books. It's also odd in that it somehow escaped my notice when I started reading the series in 1991, so this is actually my first exposure to this particular book. Naturally, I took advantage of 's reviews by other readers and found a general atmosphere of disappointment surrounding it. However, I think that aura is exaggerated. While it's true that Clarissa herself is not a terribly believable or even particularly likeable character, the notion that a beautiful, accomplished, and evidently upper-crust female stowaway (who is, however, totally indifferent to the opposite sex for an unaccountable reason) could play havoc with a 19th C. warship's company, both among the officers and on the lower deck, rings profoundly true. Likewise, because the story line follows a voyage across the Pacific with a "gunboat diplomacy" effort on an island sinking into civil war in the second half of it, there is an inevitable unity of plot that not all the O'Brian novels possess. (Recall that the author has set himself the task of never inventing a battle or storm, depending on ships' logs and other official sources for his entire plot). The fact that the

privateer that triggered the civil war is only sighted on the penultimate page, and therefore we are deprived of our final, cathartic sea battle, is only important if you don't read the next novel in the series, "The Wine-Dark Sea," where we are treated to the chase and battle in the author's typical fine detail. Accordingly, I conclude this book is a worthy companion to the other 20 books in the series and well worth the time of any devotee of Age of Sail warfare, with Mr. O'Brian's usual meticulous plotting, characterization, and well developed streak of humor. While I do not find Clarissa a believable character in herself, I do find her effect on the ship's company totally believable and predictable, as well as Capt. Aubrey's decision not to put back into Sydney and turn her in to the authorities when she's discovered on board, wasting time and also condemning her to the tender mercies of officialdom who have treated HMS Surprise quite badly in the previous novel. The Truelove takes its proper place in the Aubrey/Maturin canon. While I wouldn't rate it among the best in that canon, it holds its own, and I look forward to seeing if it will continue to do so on a second reading.

Some rambles: Unfortunately I didn't read the prior book "Nutmeg of Surprise" first, and I missed out on some stuff. This book is also called Clarissa Oakes, I'm not sure why they changed it to Truelove for the US Market. Enjoyable, much more action oriented for Aubrey, and a lot of psycho/social observations for Maturin. It's part of a series of books that are one long voyage (1813?). In some sense, it's a more efficient technique for both the writer and the reader, most importantly it works. Much of the internal dialog is switched to letters that Aubrey/Maturin write to their respective wives. I like this format better, and cleaner than the way the author normally writes some of the stuff that is in the heads of the characters. The author has done this before, but it really is done well this time. Maturin mostly journal writes, his letters to his wife are criminally sparse. I like this series, and I like that the author is a 'foodie', he really likes to describe the meals and pudding. I bought the cookbook Lobscurse and Spotted Dog (Grossman and Thomas, 1997, ISBN 9780393320947 or 9-393-32094-4) from a used online book vendor here at www.abebooks.com, and hope to try some of the recipes. Allegedly the cookbook translates 19th century food ingredients to more modern tastes.

If you are into this series, my opinion will not matter in the least. There were some highs and lows, but altogether a typically excellent book from Patrick O'Brian.

Ok, I'm a fan of the entire series, but like all of the books in the series, this one stands alone well. Excellent character development, interesting turns in the plot, interesting historical perspectives on

Hawaii and other Pacific islands as well as sufficient interesting technical details for those interesting in the sailing "men of war" of the early 19th century. I won't give the story away here (go to Wikipedia for that!), but the author (in my opinion) does an excellent job of bringing life 200 years ago into sharp and vivid focus. The people are just as real as those I come in contact with every day, and the problems that they face in this story are just as real as my own problems. As I read the story, I felt I was coming to really know them as real people. It's the lesser characters that make or break a novel-- the supporting cast. And in the case of this book, the supporting cast is well described, colorful, interesting and often unpredictable. Again-- kudos. The story resolves well-- no cliffhanger at the end, but a solid and comfortable ending. That's what I like about this series-- each book fits together with the others, but each story stands alone very, very well. The reader also does well, with excellent use of accent and timing-- a performer, not just a reader.

From my favorite series ever. I learned answers to questions not raised in classes. Must remember to breathe when reading them. I like the Kindle version for definitions, the paperbacks for all the reasons we love paper pages.

I've recently undertaken to read all of the Maturin-Aubrey series. I've just finished this volume and it doesn't seem to be one of his best. The earlier stories seemed to have more energy to them. In the middle here it seems that while the relationships are more developed we can almost feel the characters and perhaps the author aging. Still, O'Brian is a great story teller and clearly in love with the period he's writing about and the characters he has so painstakingly crafted. I don't think I could ever say I'm disappointed by these stories, but I had hoped for the same energy he lent to his earlier stories. Perhaps he'll surprise me again later on.

Great series of historical fiction

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