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John Dunmore, *Storms and Dreams: The Life of Louis de Bougainville* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2007). 296 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, appendix, bibliography and index. \$45.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 13: 978-1-60223-000-2.

Review by Margaret Sankey, University of Sydney.

A subject search on the internet reveals that Bougainville, the Pacific island in the Solomon group belonging to Papua-New Guinea, has over the last twenty years provoked more interest than Louis-Antoine Bougainville, the eighteenth-century *philosophe*, career army and naval officer who discovered it and after whom it is named. It is to be hoped that John Dunmore's recent book, *Storms and Dreams: the Life of Louis de Bougainville* will bring this remarkable figure to a new generation of readers.

Dunmore is well-known for his pioneering work on the French exploration in the Southern Hemisphere in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (*French Explorers in the Pacific*, Oxford, 1966, 1969). Since that time he has focused particularly on Louis-Antoine de Bougainville's circumnavigation of the globe during 1767 and 1768, publishing a translation into English of his circumnavigation (Bougainville's *Pacific Journal*, London: Hakluyt, 2002) and then in 2005 (under the Exisle imprint in Australasia) his biography of Bougainville entitled *Storms and Dreams: Louis de Bougainville: Soldier, Explorer, Statesman*.

Bougainville's circumnavigation and his discoveries in Tahiti and the Pacific Ocean are the best known episodes, albeit significant ones, in his rich and full life. His encounter with the "noble savages" of Tahiti fed the European Enlightenment imaginary and he is a significant figure in the long list of European explorers, preceding the Englishman Captain James Cook, who from the early seventeenth century searched in vain for the fabled Great South Land, exemplified in Ortelius's map of 1570. This new 2007 edition of Dunmore's work, with the modified title and published by the University of Alaska, will bring the biography to a North American audience, demonstrating as it does that Bougainville's achievements in the Northern Hemisphere were no less significant, if less spectacular, than those in the Southern Hemisphere.

The present title of Dunmore's work, *Storms and Dreams*, indicates the broad lines of his interpretation of Bougainville's life. Born into 1729 in Paris, Bougainville weathered many storms in his eventful life, not the least of which was the French Revolution. Clearly a man of action, endowed with prodigious energy, Bougainville is also a man of reflection, a gifted mathematician and a *philosophe*, with all that entails in terms of Enlightenment ideals. It is in fact his dreams and ideals which provide the motivation and impulse for his actions: the many adversities he encounters are accepted philosophically as he turns to another sphere in which to exercise his dream-fuelled energy. The title of the prior Australasian edition, mentioned above, is more explicit. It illustrates the breadth of Bougainville's activity for he defies simple categorization—he is not just a gifted navigator, explorer, soldier, statesman, diplomat and writer but all of these, sometimes at the same time, sometimes consecutively, always at least and sometimes more than the sum of these parts.

His father, Pierre-Yves was a lawyer and instead of following on in the family tradition, as did his sickly elder brother, Jean-Pierre, he joined the army, found a patron in Madame de Pompadour, became

secretary to the Duke of Mirepoix and was sent to Canada to help defend the French possessions against the English, playing an important role in organizing French defences. Fighting at the side of Montcalm in the battle of the Heights of Abraham in 1760, he was part of the defeated French army. Well-educated and a gifted mathematician, he also published a treatise on infinitesimal calculus.

Bougainville had read the President de Brosses's *Navigation aux Terres australes*, published in 1755, which enjoined the French to seek *Terra australis incognita*, supposedly discovered in 1504 by the French navigator Gonneville. Seeking a new project on his return to France from Canada, he submitted a plan to the Duke de Choiseul to set up a colony on the Falklands, at that time uninhabited, to be followed by acircumnavigation of the globe with the idea of searching for the elusive Great South Land. The little French colony set up in 1763 prospered but Spain objected to France's annexation of the Falklands, alleging prior discovery of the desolate islands. Bougainville was involved in the Franco-Spanish negotiations but was obliged to bow to Spanish demands and after much discussion Spain was granted ownership.

In 1766 Bougainville, on the first leg of his circumnavigation of the world, effected the handing-over of the colony to Spain and organized the repatriation of the colonists. During the circumnavigation in the *Boudeuse* and the *Etoile*, Bougainville visited Tahiti, the New Cythera and embarked the native Ahu-toru whom he would take back to Paris. Sailing on, he was deterred by the Great Barrier Reef, and did not encounter Australia. He concluded that the Great South Land did not exist and rediscovered the Solomon Islands, originally sighted by Mendana two hundred years previously. The voyage was an outstanding success, and returning to France in 1769 Bougainville was hailed as a hero, granted a pension and appointed to the rank of *capitaine de vaisseau*. His account of his voyage, *Voyage autour du monde* (1771), was well-written and popular and continues to be read today.

His next dream was to explore the Arctic and seek the North-West Passage but the funds and support are not forthcoming. He was sent in 1778 to support the Americans in the War of Independence. Marrying at the relatively late age of 51 in 1780, he was almost immediately sent off to the West Indies under Admiral de Grasse to fight the British, and as a result of this unsuccessful expedition, he was court-martialled in France for the role he played, thus ending his naval career. His return to favour was signaled by Louis XVI's endorsement of his application to join the Académie des Sciences in 1788. Louis XVI subsequently asked him in 1791 to head the French Navy, a position which he prudently declined.

During the Revolution Bougainville managed to keep his distance from his aristocratic connections at Court by remaining with his family in Normandy. He was, however, imprisoned at Coutances in Normandy but at the fall of Robespierre he was freed, just before he was to have been transferred to Paris for execution. After the Revolution, he became the loyal subject of Napoleon, a sort of elder statesman. He was, for example, instrumental in obtaining Napoléon's agreement to the release of the English explorer, Matthew Flinders, imprisoned by the French in Mauritius. He also devoted himself increasingly to his writing, his scientific pursuits and his family—one of his sons, Hyacinthe, would join the Baudin expedition to the Southern hemisphere in 1800 and return with his own command in 1825. Attaining glory and honours during his lifetime, Bougainville died at the age of 82 in 1811 and was honoured as a great man by being buried in the Panthéon.

Dunmore's enthralling account of Bougainville's life draws heavily on the author's familiarity with and understanding of the events shaping French history. One of the pegs on which he hangs his story of Bougainville's life is that of his social status. Born into a family of the haute bourgeoisie, his mother was from the noble d'Arboulin family and Bougainville enjoyed aristocratic support for his various ventures throughout career. However, in the hierarchical ancien régime army and the navy, he was an officer of the blue and as such thwarted and made aware of his inferior status on several occasions by the officers of the red, the aristocrats. Dunmore contends that it was his in-between status that is responsible for his successful and action-packed life, both as a spur to action and as an element in his surviving the

Revolution. Dunmore presents Bougainville as consummate political animal who could keep afloat in the turbulences of the times. He comes across as a sympathetic character: witty and urbane—a man of the eighteenth-century salons; a man of strong beliefs who can adapt to the circumstances and even survive a court-martial, relatively unscathed. As well as telling the man, Dunmore also lets Bougainville speak and quotes extensively from Bougainville's writings. This is effective in giving another angle on the man, as Bougainville, nourished by his classical education, expressed himself with wit and pertinence.

Several biographies of Bougainville, both in French and in English, have appeared in the course of the last century, many of which have been devoted to specific aspects of his career or periods of his life. The most recent biography before the volume under review is *The Sea Has No End* by Victor Suthren, published a year before *Storms and Dreams*, in 2004 (Toronto, The Dundurn Group). It covers the same ground as Dunmore but in much less detail, focussing more on Bougainville and Canada.

Dunmore's eminently readable and engaging biography aims at presenting a rounded portrait of this complex and multi-faceted figure, exploring his writings as well as his actions, and showing the rich tapestry of a life rather than emphasizing episodes of it which, with hindsight, might seem more significant. The biography is aimed at a wide audience, perhaps at the general English-speaking reader rather than at the specialist historian, as it contains little new material, relying heavily on secondary sources such as Jean-Etienne Martin Allanic's biography of Bougainville (*Bougainville navigateur et les découvertes de son temps*, PUF, 1964) and Charles de la Roncière's biography of the navigator (1942), as well as on his *Histoire de la marine française* (1909–1932). It is the organization of this material, however, which is particularly judicious. Dunmore picks his way with consummate skill through the complexities of French political intrigues and foreign policy, as well as bringing to life the episodes of Bougainville's life.

Assuming little knowledge on the part of the English-speaking reader of the intricacies of French eighteenth and early nineteenth century history, Dunmore gives much helpful background information, both as regards the exposition and interpretation of historical events and in the creation of local colour—the harsh Canadian winter, the desolate landscape of the Falklands. As well as presenting a portrait of Bougainville, Dunmore succeeds in giving a snapshot of the momentous times both at home and abroad through which Bougainville lived, and the pre- and post-Revolutionary confusions which he navigated as successfully as any of the marine hazards he encountered. Dunmore is at his best when describing the man of action. During the post-Revolutionary period when Bougainville was much more the diplomat and adviser he becomes a somewhat shadowy figure—a relatively small proportion of the book is devoted to these post-revolutionary years, which after all occupied 22 years of Bougainville's life. It would be interesting to see this part fleshed out more and to read more about Bougainville's scientific endeavours, but it is understandable that this is not within the scope of the present volume.

Dunmore's book contains helpful maps, a useful bibliography, an index and an interesting Appendix entitled "Bougainville commemorated", which lists places, streets and educational institutions named after him throughout the world. Most of these are in France but a large number are also in the Pacific and Australia. The black and white illustrations provide interesting visual information but it is a pity that they are not in colour and that the quality is not better.

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