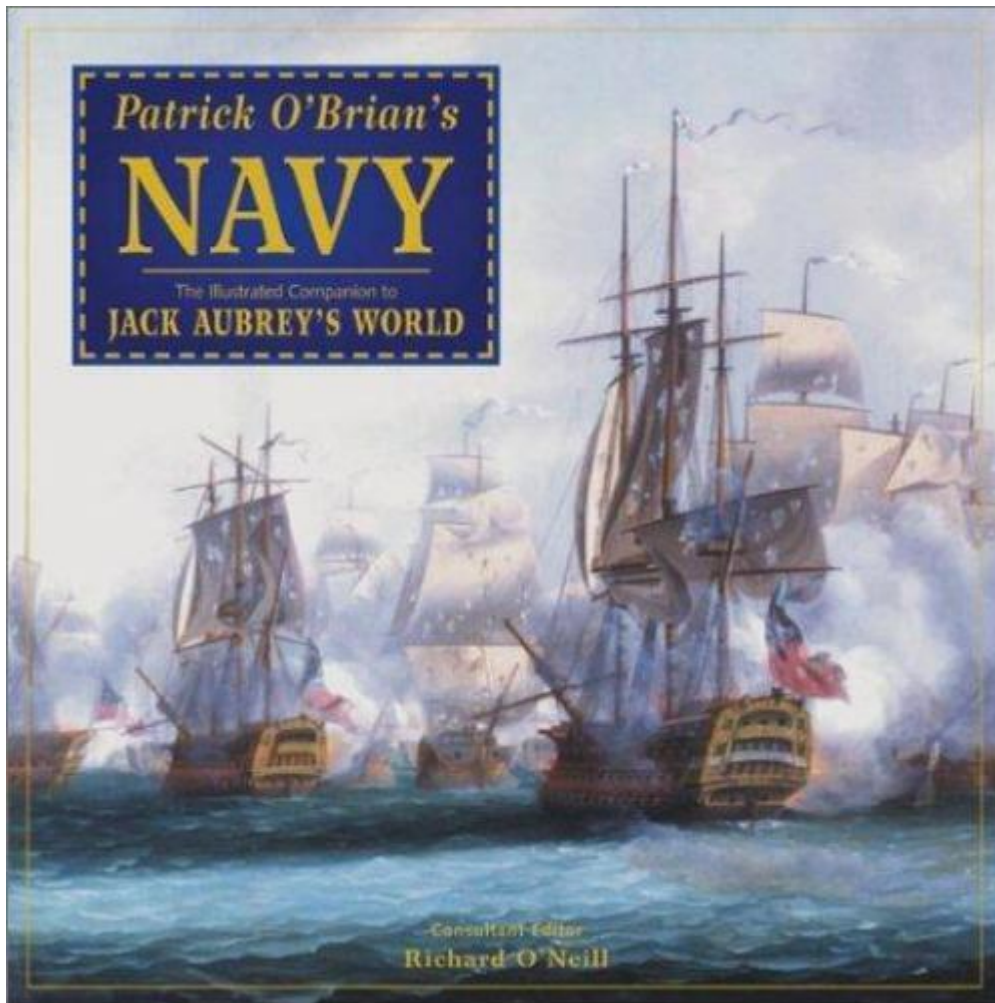


OUCH! The Ultimate Putdown



by Reg Green

A thoughtful and knowledgeable essay by Charlton Heston that I came across this week calls Patrick O'Brian's novels about the British navy – the *Royal Navy* – in the wars against Napoleon “irresistibly readable, indeed almost impossible to put down.” How can I, who (like many other readers of this magazine) have read them all, disagree? My first thoughts, however, flew back over the years to a friend who reviewed books and told me he had written of one, “Once you put this book down, you’ll find it almost impossible to pick it up again.”

PS Perhaps he only dreamed of saying it. But even after all these years just the thought that someday I might have the

opportunity to write something so deliciously malicious and see it in print (under my own name!) gives me a tingle.