

Desolation Island Study Guide

Desolation Island by Patrick O'Brian

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Plot Summary

Captain Jack Aubrey, c. 1809, takes command of HMS Leopard, a fourth-rate ship-of-the-line with a tarnished history. He sets sail for Botany Bay, Australia, for the dual purpose of transporting criminals to the penal colony and thereafter to recover the infamous governor William Bligh and escort him home to England. In the event, Aubrey accomplishes neither. Leopard is pursued by a Dutch opponent and, subsequent to victory, crashes into a submerged iceberg. Half of the crew deserts while Aubrey and the faithful struggle to make landfall on Desolation Island where repairs are made as Stephen Maturin intrigues with an American spy.

The novel, fifth in a series of twenty novels, opens ashore with Aubrey and Maturin discussing their respective futures. Aubrey is a hopeless boob ashore and, flush with a large and recent windfall, pursues several activities seemingly designed to dissipate wealth. Meanwhile Maturin pursues Diana Villiers, his unrequited love. As usual, Villiers absconds with another man, leaving Maturin to pay the bills. Maturin learns that Villiers has been compromised by her association with Louisa Wogan, a captured American spy. Upon the request of the intelligence service, Maturin agrees to accompany Wogan on her voyage to Botany Bay; he will pose as the ship's surgeon and seek to gain whatever intelligence advantage he can. Happily for the narrative construction, Wogan is to be transported aboard HMS Leopard, the very ship to which Aubrey has been appointed.

Aubrey takes command and leads Leopard south through stormy and then calm seas. Near the equator the ship enters the doldrums and drifts about for weeks in the oppressive heat. At this inopportune moment gaol fever breaks out amidst the prisoners and rapidly spreads to the crew. The fever is deadly and results in daily burials. The much reduced crew eventually recovers, the doldrums are transited, and the voyage continues after a brief stop at Brazil to discharge convalescents. Leopard enters the southern seas and encounters a hostile Dutch warship, the *Waakzaamheid*. Hopelessly outclassed, Leopard runs for safety and is pushed further and further south by the relentless pursuer. Eventually in a gale the ships close and a running fight is joined. After hours, *Waakzaamheid* is dismantled, broaches to, and is lost in the heavy seas. Aubrey is seriously wounded in the encounter and Leopard is far to the south—and in dangerous waters.

Leopard briefly resumes her voyage before running onto underwater ice. Taking on water at a fearful rate, Leopard is deemed lost by many of the crew who desert into the ship's boats. Aubrey and his loyal shipmates remain behind and manage to save the ship long enough to reach Desolation Island, where she mostly is repaired. There, Leopard meets an American whaler. In exchange for Maturin's medical care the Americans allow Leopard to use her forge and complete her refit. Meanwhile Maturin arranges false information to fall into the hands of Wogan and surreptitiously arranges her escape to the American vessel. Carrying a poison pill, Wogan flees as Leopard sets out to sea to complete her troubled voyage.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Captain Jack Aubrey takes command of HMS Leopard, a fourth-rate ship-of-the-line with a tarnished history. He sets sail for Botany Bay, Australia, for the dual purpose of transporting criminals to the penal colony and thereafter to reinstate the infamous governor William Bligh following political revolt. In the event, Aubrey accomplishes neither. Leopard is pursued by a Dutch opponent and, subsequent to victory, crashes into a submerged iceberg. Half of the crew deserts while Aubrey and the faithful struggle to make landfall on Desolation Island where repairs are made as Stephen Maturin intrigues with an American spy.

The novel opens with English Post-Captain Jack Aubrey appointed to the Sea-Fencibles and living a life of dissipation ashore, pursuing huge losses at the gaming table, purchasing vastly expensive and under-performing racing horses, and funding expensive quack schemes to extract precious metals from ancient slag heaps. Sophie, Aubrey's thrifty and wise wife, as always is concerned and does what little she can to curb Aubrey's enthusiasm for wasting money. Two of Aubrey's old shipmates, Killick and Bonden, are retained as servants while Aubrey is ashore and, flush with riches from his recent adventures—detailed in a previous novel in the series—Aubrey expands his house and lives large. Aubrey's particular friend and confidant, Stephen Maturin, is a renowned surgeon and natural scientist and makes occasional calls, both for pleasure and of a professional nature, on the Aubrey household.

Upon the initial call presented in the novel, Maturin finds Aubrey busy with get-rich-quick schemes that are patently doomed to expensive failure. Sophie detects Maturin is still deeply enamored by her cousin, the beautiful and worldly Diana Villiers—yet Maturin scarcely admits this to himself (in previous novels in the series, Villiers and Maturin had maintained an uneasy and usually one-sided romance). Maturin joins with some other visiting physicians to examine Mrs. Williams, Sophie's hypochondriac mother. During the examination conversation Maturin suggests he knows a patient deeply addicted to laudanum—in fact, he himself is the patient. After the examination Maturin joins Aubrey for some private conversation and learns that Aubrey will shortly command HMS Leopard on a prolonged voyage to Botany Bay, Australia, to reinstate the infamous governor William Bligh, of HMS Bounty fame. Maturin notes that Leopard is a notoriously old and rotten ship, to which Aubrey enthusiastically reports a complete overhaul with many new innovations. Aubrey invites Maturin on the voyage, but he declines on vague grounds—he is hoping for reconciliation with Villiers and expects to spend much time doting on her, if all goes well. The conversation then winds through various aspects of Aubrey's money-losing programs and Maturin vaguely encourages caution. Maturin informs Aubrey that Villiers is again in London.

The two men then venture to Craddock's, a local card-playing saloon, and Aubrey loses heavily to his regular table while Maturin looks on. Maturin then runs a few errands and



returns to find Aubrey has again lost heavily. Maturin suggests that Aubrey's table consists of a bunch of sharpers. The evening drawing to a close, the two men withdraw to Aubrey's home and continue their conversation about the upcoming trip in *Leopard*. Later, they meet with Peter Heywood who will serve as lieutenant aboard *Leopard*. Heywood had been on HMS *Bounty*, serving under Bligh, when the mutiny had occurred. Heywood proves a remarkably reticent source of information about Bligh.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The novel is part of a series of novels dealing with Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin, and the two protagonists have been fully characterized in previous texts—thus, the men are presented without the mass of supporting characterization that would be typical of a standalone novel. The novel begins on land where Aubrey is nearly a boob in his outlook and dealings with others—he squanders fortunes not because he is a spendthrift but because he is incapable of skepticism. On the other hand, Maturin faces no especial difficulties ashore and functions well enough whether aboard ship or not. The lengthy setup of Aubrey's command of *Leopard* is typical of the attention paid to constructing a believable setting—it would be atypical for a naval captain such as Aubrey to repetitively host a personal friend such as Maturin aboard a commissioned ship: the narrative provides a plausible if strained explanation.

The chapter presents a gloss of Aubrey's family life though Sophie and the children play a very minor role in the novel, as do Ashbury cottage and Mrs. Williams. Indeed, Sophie seems particularly eager for Aubrey to go to sea, apparently so he does not squander all of the family wealth. Maturin's early conference with other physicians is interesting and allows him to discuss a case of opium addiction—indeed he speaks of himself and his own battle with addiction that spans most volumes in the series of novels. Maturin is also still passionately attached to Villiers, a relationship that has been fully developed in previous novels. Indeed, the failure of the novel to support Maturin's devotion is notable. Likewise, Maturin's complex connection with English intelligence is not properly explained in the present novel. This all results in the novel being unable to fully stand alone—the heavy reliance on previous novels, however, is not particularly disagreeable as any series of novels reaching twenty volumes must be necessarily interconnected.

HMS *Leopard* is first presented early in the novel. The ship is a lightly fictionalized representation of an actual vessel in the Royal Navy, and in latter chapters is referred to as the historic ship. The ship-of-war was involved in an infamous historic event. The chapter concludes with additional historic references to William Bligh, of HMS *Bounty* fame, who has been recently deposed as governor in Australia. These events make it possible to date the novel to 1809 with a fair degree of certainty.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Maturin makes his call upon Villiers; his travel is introspective and full of self-critical observations and dread. At her apartments he discovers the worst—she is not there to receive him and furthermore she has suspiciously fled in company of Mr. Johnson, her one-time (and apparently once again) American lover. Villiers has left a letter which Maturin stuffs in his pocket. She has also left a considerable stack of bills which Maturin mechanically pays off. Later, Maturin reads the letter and discovers Villiers has fled due to impending charges of arrest for vague reasons. She intends to return to America. Maturin's brooding is interrupted by a call to attend on the Admiralty.

At the Admiralty Maturin is greeted by one Admiral Sievewright who makes bumbling accusations claiming that Villiers is some type of spy and that Maturin must necessarily be implicated in some type of shady affair. Maturin is outraged and the encounter quickly escalates into a shouting match after which Maturin absents himself, returns to his lodgings, and reads through some scientific journals while he attempts to regain his composure. After a few hours Maturin is joined by Sir Joseph Blaine. Blaine is the retired chief of naval intelligence, beyond all reproach, and a personal friend and professional colleague of Maturin. Blaine makes apologies for Sievewright's impudent incompetence and the two friends make small talk on a variety of topics. Blaine then expounds on a recent situation—a certain Mrs. Louisa Wogan, an American, has been discovered as a spy and arrested. She had been in close communication with Villiers for a prolonged period and Villiers had maintained a connection with Johnson, an American. Villiers was therefore implicated and her flight with Johnson seems to confirm some guilt. In the meantime, Wogan has been processed and is to be transported to Botany Bay, Australia—aboard HMS Leopard. Maturin considers that Blaine is judging him—has Maturin been dealt a mortal blow by Villier's repeated absconding? Maturin decides he must act to retain his reputation and indeed his secure sense of self, so when Blaine suggests that Maturin accompany Leopard, in order to pick over Wogan on the voyage, Maturin accepts. Blaine presents Maturin with all the information he has about Wogan, including the fact that she has a hopeless lover, a clinger-on, named Michael Herapath, also an American.

Later, Maturin greets Aubrey who is now in a rage upon being informed Leopard will transport prisoners. Aubrey is drafting a letter declining command, but when Sophie, concerned for Maturin's depression over Villiers, learns Maturin will join the voyage she manipulates Aubrey into retaining the command for the good of their common friend. Later in the conversation, Aubrey confirms Maturin's suspicions about the sharpers at Craddock's. Additional small talk fills out the remaining few days ashore and Leopard completes her stores and crew.



Chapter 2 Analysis

Maturin quashes his interest in remaining in England by discovering that once again Villiers has deserted him for another man. As usual, he cleans up her mess insofar as possible. The tentative connection between Villiers and Wogan troubles Maturin for much of the novel but in the end proves to have been of little import beyond a personal relationship. However, as the novel's action ends at sea Maturin has no way of verifying whether his intuition regarding Villier's innocence is accurate. In this and other concerns, the novel begins a narrative arc that extends through the next few novels in the series. The lengthy scene between Maturin and his longtime friend and intelligence companion Blaine is intriguing and particularly well-written. Maturin is here presented as the consummate intellectual, able to harbor delicate feelings while simultaneously dissecting them like a specimen under a scalpel.

Blaine completes the novel's setup by noting that the American spy Wogan will be transported aboard *Leopard*, commanded by Aubrey. Blaine's request that Maturin accompany Wogan thus puts Aubrey and Maturin back at sea together pursuing individual missions along the same nautical course. Wogan is presented as a capable but not exceptional spy, reliant mainly on remarkably loose morals and a comely face and form to obtain connections. The "Mrs." epithet applied to her is never fully explained, but Blaine suggests Wogan is married to a vague figure—presumably a Mr. Wogan—who has acted as her pimp in times past. Wogan herself never refers to any husband and later confesses to numerous presumably sexual liaisons with various English government officials. Throughout her marriage and dalliances Herapath—a hapless lover—clings to her insofar as he is able. Thus, Wogan is obviously sexually available. Coupled with her apparently remarkable similarity in appearance to Villiers, Wogan's morals will tempt even the reserved and opium-sedated Maturin.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Leopard weathers a lengthy northwestern gale in the Bay of Biscay, clawing to the north and then northwest to avoid the lee shore of Spain. During the days of toil the prisoners are fairly prostrated by seasickness but they do take the time to murder their warden and his assistant. As the weather finally moderates, Leopard wears to the southeast and continues her voyage. Aubrey takes this first opportunity to examine his ship and finds the forepeak, where the prisoners have been ensconced, a vile pit of vomit, excrement, blood, and rotting straw. He orders immediate improvements and then visits the female prisoners, kept in separate lodgings. He finds Wogan much disheveled but in good enough spirits—she has been subsisting on her personal store of foodstuffs. She has also killed a rat, and Aubrey kicks it out into the passageway. Maturin casually notices that the rats are acting somewhat peculiar, as well, but thinks it must be due to the stormy weather. Maturin meanwhile organizes his sickbay and becomes acquainted with Paul Martin, his assistant, and some of the other members of the crew.

Pullings announces that he has retrieved a stowaway from the hold, which causes a stir. Aubrey has the man—one Michael Herapath—put to work as a sailor, not realizing him to be an American citizen. Herapath is placed in a mess with Bonden, Joe Plaice, and other reliable sailors. The undercover Maturin realizes Herapath has stowed away to pursue Wogan, and takes steps to meet the man. Maturin eventually calls on Wogan as a physician and makes an examination of her. As the days pass, the bustle of the ship's departing activity dies down and a monotonous routine takes over. Maturin discovers quarts of laudanum in the ship's stores and resolves to abstain. After the gale Leopard makes fine headway and runs rapidly to the south. Aubrey begins to mold his crew and officers as Maturin begins to get acquainted with Wogan.

Aubrey takes the ship in hand but has some trouble with Grant, the 2nd lieutenant. Grant has served as captain and has some experience in southern waters. He considers himself a superior seaman and believes he is appointed well below his abilities. While not insubordinate, Grant does make trouble through inappropriate opinions and observations.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Leopard finally sets to sea and will not make significant landfall again until reaching Desolation Island. The voyage starts with a gale and the writing is enjoyable, well-crafted, and very accurate in nautical terminology. Leopard's course and sailing action is engaging. Though the ship handles well enough and the crew is composed mainly of reliable men, some cracks are presented. The second lieutenant—Grant—is arrogant and difficult and the wardroom has a few rotten apples. The real disaster of the shakedown stage, however, involves the prisoners in the forepeak. Provided mainly as



cover for transporting Wogan, they are a particularly violent and belligerent lot. Even suffering from seasickness they manage to murder their jailor within the first few hours of the cruise. Aubrey thus entrusts them mainly to his Marines. The prisoners also bring gaol fever—typhus—aboard, and Maturin misses an early clue to the coming epidemic by mistaking the ship's rats' unusual behavior as being due to seasickness rather than infection.

The discovery of the stowaway Herapath completes the novel's initial setup and introduces the last major character of the book. Herapath proves honest and easily manipulated. Maturin of course knows all about Wogan, Herapath, and their relationship—though they are entirely oblivious throughout the entire novel that Maturin is anything but the ship's surgeon. Immediately upon Herapath's discovery, Maturin sets about positioning the man as a pawn in intelligence machinations. Herapath is an interesting but unexceptional character noted mainly for his unreasoning devotion to Wogan whom he knows from firsthand experience to be unreliable.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Leopard makes excellent progress and the daily routine is interrupted only by punishment on Saturday. Herapath is brought up on being absent during his watch, Jack ascribes it to simple ignorance and the punishment is very lenient—Aubrey admonishes him. Later Herapath goes aloft, accompanied by an old salt. He is afraid but gains the top and feels liberated by the vast panorama. He begins to run about until he loses his balance and plunges into the sea. Aubrey, nearly as a matter of course, draws the drowning man from the water and Maturin revives him. Wogan sees the entire episode and—for the first time—realizes that Herapath is aboard. Sometime later Aubrey writes a long letter home to Sophie, noting all of the recent happenings and his interpretation thereof. He critiques his crew in an honest way and then closes the letter. Meanwhile Maturin has gone ashore at Cape Verdes to secure medicinal supplies.

Maturin writes an extensive journal entry and notes that recently he happened upon Herapath—again absent from his position—whispering to Wogan through a hole in the locked door to her tiny cell. Maturin reviews his extensive file on Wogan and writes that he is making good progress in gaining her trust—indeed she is a sophomoric spy and appears entirely ignorant of Maturin's true intent. Maturin concludes that compromising her will not prove difficult. He begins to mention Herapath to Wogan as a unique case—she claims an interest because she had seen his fall. It seems simple enough to Maturin, and soon enough he discusses Herapath with Wogan freely. All along, the three maintain their innocence.

Meanwhile, the entire crew feels great desire for Wogan or the other female prisoners. Aubrey learns that the younger members have surreptitiously bored a peeping hole through the rear wall of Wogan's cell and have been taking turns watching her disrobe. He puts a complete stop to such shenanigans. The voyage continues and Maturin gets to know his fellow shipmates. On several occasions Grant criticizes Aubrey's handling of the ship and choice of course—obviously this is an egregious breach of manners not to mention insubordinate. Then the wind dies and all of the prisoners, heretofore largely listless, become seriously ill; as their symptoms clarify, Maturin diagnoses gaol-fever.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The chapter presents an interesting but routine narrative technique by introducing a letter home from Aubrey followed by a journal entry by Maturin. Both texts flow naturally and are presented in an appropriate voice; they both expose inner thoughts and deep feelings which would ordinarily not come out in common conversation. A somewhat unique connection is forged between Aubrey and Herapath during the rescue-from-drowning scene. Wogan's viewing of Aubrey's nude body is humorous and a fictional inversion of usual events. While she is perusing his anatomy, the midshipmen are



perusing her anatomy—they have drilled peepholes through the walls of her tiny cabin. Thus begins the novel's restrained, intricate, and playful treatment of the sexually-charged atmosphere of a man-of-war with hundreds of men and three women—one of them obviously pregnant and all of them dangerous criminals. In any event, Herapath takes every opportunity to communicate with Wogan and even gets in trouble for being absent his post. Maturin acts to allow Herapath to meet with Wogan. The chapter also continues to develop Grant as a capable but haughty man who is not above casual insubordination. Grant subtly but constantly criticizes Aubrey's handling of the ship—an irritating trait in any man but particularly when directed at such an obvious nautical genius as Aubrey. Grant's insubordination comes to a head late in the novel when he leads a near-mutiny and then abandons Leopard.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Leopard sails south until entering the doldrums, which are encountered unusually far to the north. As the ship wallows, the prisoners' strange fever takes on a deadly turn for the worse and sickness runs throughout the ship. Maturin makes every effort to contain the disease—gaol fever—but to no avail. Scores die, including the captain's clerk and Martin, Maturin's assistant. Herapath is selected to replace him—as an American, he can only act as an assistant rather than receiving an appointment. Pullings sickens but clings to life. About six weeks pass as the ship lies becalmed and the disease runs its course—at the end, Maturin has a convalescent list of about sixty-five people; 116 have died. Leopard is left with fewer than 200 men as crew. Throughout the course of the disease Maturin subtly maneuvers Herapath, eventually pretending to rely upon the young man to accompany Wogan on her daily exercises; obviously, Herapath is overjoyed to not only be freed from the life of a common sailor but to also promenade his love. The couple tries to restrain their feelings but to Maturin his successful manipulations are obvious. Maturin insists that most of his convalescents be landed as soon as possible—otherwise they will surely die. Aubrey therefore heads into Recife, Brazil, as soon as the winds allow. Most of the convalescents are offloaded during a brief stop where no liberty is granted. As Maturin readies to go ashore with the invalids, Herapath asks to accompany the group. Maturin declines per Aubrey's orders and Herapath then furtively delivers a letter to Maturin, and asks him to post it in Brazil. Maturin peruses it and discovers it is addressed to Villiers—further implicating her in some type of plot. Maturin subdues his own feelings and copies the letter. Later still, Herapath delivers a second letter and requests Maturin post it, too, in Brazil. Maturin retains this letter as he realizes it is a lengthy encoded missive. He spends the next hours cracking the code and then copies all of the material and sends duplicates of everything back to England.

Meanwhile, Aubrey frets about losing Pullings as his first officer and fumes that he will have to rely upon the oppositional Grant henceforth. As he has predicted, Pulling's departure is marked by a shakeup in the crew, and Grant becomes even more brazen in his insubordination. Bonden informs Maturin that most of the crew considers the ship unlucky and cursed. As Leopard departs Brazil she encounters another English warship, who warns her of a powerful Dutch ship-of-the-line, the *Waakzaamheid*, patrolling the general area.

Chapter 5 Analysis

The chapter introduces a new phase in the narrative. The initial chapters have established the setting, introduced all the dominant characters, established the basic plot, and introduced various tensions and conflicts. Chapter 5 presents the first real crisis of the novel and develops the military situation in such a way as to remove many



options from Aubrey. Fever breaks out in earnest and races throughout the ship, killing most of the prisoners and about one-third of Leopard's crew and sickening about one-fourth of the survivors. Maturin's assistant dies and is replaced by Herapath—a choice that is calculated to allow Maturin even more access to Wogan. While the fever rages even the elements conspire to punish Leopard and the ship wallows in the doldrums. The writing about the disease and its symptoms is excellent and enjoyable even as the topic is distasteful. Fortunately for the lengthy series of novels, none of the regular characters succumbs fatally to the disease's embrace. Note that in today's terminology gaol fever is known as typhus, a serious and debilitating disease even for modern medicine. Maturin's efforts are heroic and fairly successful given the situation.

Pullings, heretofore Aubrey's utterly reliable first lieutenant, sickens and becomes entirely debilitated. Maturin insists on sending Pullings ashore when Leopard touches at Recife to offload convalescents. Aubrey sorely misses Pullings and the loss is exacerbated by the natural series of promotions which follows—the insubordinate Grant becomes first lieutenant and thus Aubrey's problems are compounded. Aubrey must run a ship with a moral coward for a first lieutenant and a crew so reduced that sailing, quite apart from gunnery, is compromised. Maturin's intelligence work continues and an intercepted letter from Wogan to Villiers appears to clear Villiers of any wrongdoing. The hostile Dutch ship is also introduced in the chapter—the ship will play a major role in the remainder of the novel, driving Leopard ever south through Chapter 7 and ultimately deciding her fate for the next several weeks.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Aubrey explains to Maturin that *Waakzaamheid* so entirely outclasses *Leopard* that his obvious duty is to avoid confrontation. Nevertheless, Aubrey devises a new watch bill with his much-reduced crew and practices gunnery extensively. Aubrey has his cabin reworked to house his two brass long nine pounders as stern chasers. Maturin resumes his promenades with Wogan even as he begins to dwell upon her physical charms. Aubrey, as well as the remainder of the crew, also note her presence with a studied indifference. Many of the crew resort to taking welcome but illicit liberties with Peggy Barnes, Wogan's servant, and thus venereal disease runs rampant through the crew. Meanwhile Boswell, a pregnant gypsy woman, begins to spread gypsy foretelling among the crew and she predicts an unhappy voyage. Maturin counters both situations by various means.

On one occasion Herapath and Maturin sit and talk late into the night. Herapath relates his prolonged and unhappy tale of involvement with Wogan; it is largely banal and uninteresting through Maturin gleans much from it. Herapath has estranged his family pursuing Wogan, while she has been only an indifferent—and frequently faithless—lover in return. The talk then turns to opiates and Herapath confesses to a long period of opium smoking. Maturin, still fighting the addiction, is surprised to learn that Herapath returned to occasional opium use without immediate dependence. Later, Maturin uses Herapath's experiences to justify a return to daily use of laudanum.

Then, several days at sea, *Waakzaamheid* is sighted. The Dutch ship immediately gives chase and Aubrey is consumed with observing the enemy and maneuvering his ship to avoid combat. The larger ship closes after a prolonged chase and some ineffectual exchange of extreme-range gunfire ensues. Maturin and Wogan watch the development with indifference, instead focusing on birds. Grant demonstrates his lack of understanding of military matters by making several insipid observations. Later, as the chase continues into the night, Maturin and Aubrey dine together while Aubrey explains how *Leopard* will shortly escape the Dutchman.

Chapter 6 Analysis

The English ship is so entirely outclassed by the Dutch ship that Aubrey's only reasonable choice is to avoid confrontation. The Dutch ship has half-again as many guns, much heavier guns, and of course a full crew while *Leopard*'s crew is severely depleted. While Aubrey's decision is the only sensible one, Grant as usual criticizes it. During a prescient moment, Aubrey sacrifices much of his cabin to mount two brass long nine pounders as stern chasers—obviously he anticipates turning tail and running and wants at least some teeth in any retreat. Simultaneously, the gypsy woman prisoner begins to spread foreboding feelings throughout the crew and Peggy, the other prisoner,



begins to spread venereal disease throughout the crew. Maturin eventually deals with both problems. The chapter also introduces the first sighting of the Dutch ship and the first long-range gunnery between the two warships. That the Dutch captain has found Leopard is an early attestation of his aggressive spirit and nautical insight.

The lengthy conversation between Herapath and Maturin is interesting for several reasons. Herapath's lengthy history with Wogan is interesting but plays little actual concrete role in the remainder of the narrative. It does establish him as a relatively simple and credible character. Far more interesting is Herapath's recounting of his personal opium addiction and his note that post-addiction occasional use did not manifest intense cravings. Maturin of course seizes upon this as justification to return to his own use of the drug as a rationalized occasional use to ease the physical yearnings he has begun to experience for Wogan. That she should inspire two men to use opiates to quell their sexual desires humorously attests to her physical charms (then again, she is one of few women aboard ship).



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Morning breaks and Aubrey is astounded to discover the Dutch ship still in hot pursuit—clearly the captain is cunning and devoted to combat. A multi-day chase ensues and Leopard, to avoid combat, is driven ever southwards—far beyond what Aubrey desires. At one early stage of the pursuit the Dutch ship mounts an attempted surprise attack by sending her boats, full of men, around Leopard in the darkness. Aubrey's vigilance pays off and the attack is detected; Leopard shoots grape into the approaching boats, killing many, before sailing away. Still the Dutch ship pursues, and Aubrey is amazed at the Dutch captain's incredible ability to predict Leopard's movements. The crew begins to believe that someone aboard is sending magical messages to the enemy ship. After several days, Aubrey has hawsers run to the masts to strengthen the standing rigging.

The tension mounts throughout the chase and then in a bizarre twist one day Larkin flies into a rage during lunch and murders Howard by driving a handspike into his chest. The witnesses report Larkin's assault to be unprovoked and black rumors fly through the crew. Howard's body is consigned to the deep and Larkin is cast into irons. As the chase continues Aubrey laments the loss of Pullings and battles with Grant's constant unwanted commentary.

Still the pursuit continues. Finally, Waakzaamheid closes in heavy weather and Aubrey, seeing the Dutch captain dressed in black, wonders if the captain's son had been killed in the previous abortive attack. The Dutch ship is unrelenting and in the high running seas pursues within cannon distance. For several hours the Dutch ship's bowchasers hammer at Leopard while the English ship's stern long nines reply. Waakzaamheid tries to destroy the English ship's rudder while Aubrey aims for the Dutch ship's rigging. The firing goes on for hours as the gale increases until finally Leopard's shots destroy the Dutch ship's foremast. It goes over the side and acts as a sea anchor— Waakzaamheid loses control and slews around, broaching to as a giant wave crests her deck and tumbles her into pieces in the gale. Aubrey, bleeding and stunned from wounds caused by splinters, stares aghast as six hundred men perish in an instant. During the combat, the pregnant gypsy woman gives birth via Caesarean section—she later names her daughter Leopardina.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Chapter 7 presents the main—and nearly the only—naval encounter of the novel. Leopard flees from Waakzaamheid for many days and as the Dutch ship has the weather gauge Aubrey is forced far, far to the south—far more south than any sane captain could wish. Throughout, Grant criticizes Aubrey without offering any credible alternative to Aubrey's decisions. The Dutch ship must be victorious if general or standard combat is enjoined. Aubrey flees, the unnamed Dutch captain chases. A brief



abortive attack sees Aubrey's devoted gunnery proud as the Dutch ship's boats are shot up with grapeshot. Aubrey later surmises that the Dutch captain's son must be among the dead. This unconfirmed supposition would explain the Dutch captain's nearly maniacal pursuit of Leopard. The Dutch captain's prescient predictions of Leopard's maneuvers leads many among the crew to believe that some mystical communications are being transmitted. The ill-fated cruise of Leopard continues with a bizarre scene of mental collapse—Larkin, the master, murders a fellow officer in cold blood. The crew immediately labels Larkin a "Jonah" and concludes that Leopard must shortly be destroyed. The Dutch ship seems to be the obvious hammer.

The final combat is intriguing and well-written. As the ships drives into a gale the weather dirties and the Dutch ship closes. Aubrey takes heroic means to avoid capture but the relentless Dutch ship proves reliable and aggressive. A running fight begins which pits the Dutch bowchasers against the English sternchasers. As expected, Aubrey is the victor and the Dutch ship's foremast is shot away. Instead of propelling the ship through the following seas, the dismantled spar acts as a drogue, hauling the Dutch ship's bow perpendicular to the massive waves. The heavy wind then sets her on her beam-ends and she broaches to and is swamped by a gigantic following sea, rolling under almost immediately. Aubrey, stunned physically, is hugely depressed by the catastrophic loss even as he realizes his unlikely victory is momentous. Note how the narrative is constructed to make Aubrey's military victory nearly unattainable and yet attained. Aubrey is clearly a heroic, larger-than-life captain.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Maturin tends to Aubrey's wounds as Leopard is maneuvered through very high seas. As Aubrey is incapacitated, Grant takes charge of the operation—although his combat performance was severely lacking, he proves an excellent seaman and handles the ship well. The chase has driven Leopard beyond 43° south latitude and the wind and waves are formidable. Talk runs through the ship about Aubrey's prospects; his head wound is said by some to be debilitating. Maturin is quickly convinced that Aubrey will entirely recover and within a day his assessment proves correct. Aubrey takes the deck briefly and announces—much to Grant's dismay—that Leopard will not stop at Cape Town as the distance to backtrack is too great; Aubrey instead heads for Port Jackson. Nevertheless, Aubrey is seriously wounded and cannot remain on deck for long. During his convalescence Babbington repeatedly warns Grant about dangerous nautical conditions but Grant is too self-assured to respect Babbington's advice. Meanwhile Herapath and Wogan have pursued their relationship and Wogan confides in Maturin that she has become pregnant—a fact which he has already suspected.

Leopard sails through dangerous seas and encounters vast ice islands—icebergs—and floating broken ice. They take some ice aboard to replenish their freshwater stores; again Babbington cautions Grant but is ignored. Babbington finally resorts to calling on Aubrey directly and Aubrey takes the deck to discover Leopard in grave danger. He attempts to sail away from a great ice island but it is too late—Leopard runs onto submerged ice and receives a staggering wrench throughout the hull. The ship backs off the ice with a rending crash and immediately begins to take in huge amounts of water. As the pumps are worked, fothering-sails are passed under the forward keel—but to no avail, the ship continues to take on water. Additionally, the always-suspect rudder has been entirely dismantled and the rotten stern section collapses when repairs are attempted. The situation appears desperate indeed and after many hours of killing work the ship continues to settle. Grant, Turnbull, Fisher, Benton, and many others determine to abandon ship even though Aubrey will not countenance it. In the end, they more or less mutiny and leave the ship without Aubrey's explicit blessing—he realizes that any enforced retention would lead to violence. After looting the ship's stores of rum, the absconders pile into the ship's boats and row away into the winter mist. Aubrey and the faithful among the crew continue pumping and repairing.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Grant is finally thrust into the position of leadership he has so long desired. Aubrey's serious wounds incapacitate him for a period and Grant proves utterly reliable as a seaman faced with known problems. While frightened and cowering during combat Grant's resolve had seemed weakened, when faced only by dangerous sailing he reasserts himself creditably. Aubrey does determine that the Leopard's lengthy flight to



the south makes the intended Cape Town an unproductive destination. Hence, Leopard sails into largely uncharted seas and faces unpredictable weather. It is worth noting that sailing ships venturing into the waters sailed by Leopard quite frequently were lost with all hands.

The major development of Chapter 8 begins the final narrative arc of the novel—Leopard runs aground on unseen ice and a huge hole is rent in the hull and the rudder—always a source of speculation—is destroyed. Foundering and uncontrolled, Leopard appears to be lost. The technical description of the sinking ship is credible and compelling. The crew works to exhaustion to save the ship—Aubrey judges her salvageable but the frightened Grant deems the ship lost. The rougher part of the diminished crew, including some of the difficult officers, side with Grant while the "old reliables" stand with Aubrey. Aubrey realizes that any command would result in mutiny and thus allows Grant to take the ship's boats and leave. Grant departs into the trackless wasteland of the Antarctic in provisioned boats. Aubrey remains with the ship—it later comes as no surprise that Aubrey's decision proves correct. As appropriate, the prisoners—including Wogan—remain aboard the ship.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

As Leopard continues to take on water a third fothering-sail is passed under the rear of the keel and—fortunately—staunches the influx of seawater. The pumps gain on the water and for the next several days the crew struggles to keep the ship afloat. It is killing labor and many men drop from exhaustion, only to be roused after perhaps a few hours of respite. Even Maturin takes extensive shifts at the pumps. He is surprised to learn, however, that the remaining ship's company is in high spirits—during the near-sinking, Larkin—the murderous man believed by most of the crew to be a Jonah—drowns. With Larkin's death the crew believes the ship has been changed from unlucky to lucky—and hence they uniformly expect to survive.

Aubrey supervises the rigging of a huge steering oar which it is hoped will be able to direct the ship's course. The oar eventually proves unsuccessful and Leopard misses a near landfall and proceeds by within sight. Later, Aubrey determines to attempt a landing at Desolation Island—a little-known place only vaguely marked on the charts. In the event, Aubrey is happily correct in guessing the location and under difficult situations the exhausted crew and failing ship make the harbor of Desolation Island. As Maturin has encountered the early signs of scurvy among the exhausted crew, he is happy to learn that Desolation Island is home to a type of yellowish and pungent cabbage. It is also home to vast herds of birds and the crew stuffs itself on eggs, meat, fowl, and cabbage.

Throughout the last stages of the voyage Maturin determines that Wogan and Herapath are perhaps unlikely to reach Botany Bay. He therefore contrives to use Wogan to plant false intelligence information. He creates a huge store of false information and encodes it; he then leads Herapath to believe the information was abandoned by one of the people who abandoned the ship. As expected, Herapath carries the news to Wogan who predictably demands Herapath copy the documents. Herapath dutifully complies, feeling all the while as though he is betraying Maturin's trust. By the time Leopard pulls into Desolation Island, Wogan has a secret copy of a poison pill of false intelligence.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Chapter 9 takes Leopard and her remaining crew from the brink of disaster to the safety of Desolation Island. The chapter presents a large amount of technical information about sailing, including the emergency measure of fothering, the construction and operation of chain pumps, the internal structure of the ship, and a listing of some of the ship's contents. This vast amount of technical information is presented in such a conversational and engaging manner, however, that it hardly appears obtrusive and becomes part of the narration. From a purely logical interpretation, Aubrey's decision to remain aboard must be judged as essentially sound—the ship remains afloat and is



saved. Note that the narrative plays with a mystical explanation as well. During the near sinking episode Larkin, the putative Jonah, drowned. Freed of the man's curse, Leopard struggles on to ultimate survival. This twisting of fate is typical of the novel and doubtlessly forms part of its general appeal.

After missing one island, Aubrey searches the charts and stirs up Desolation Island. Its position is noted in the text but Aubrey also comments that Captain Cook, as redoubtable a sailor as ever sailed, failed to locate the island at the given position. Aubrey surmises the island must lay some 10° away from the charted position. As if conjuring safe harbor from nothing, Aubrey makes a perfect landfall at Desolation Island only moments before a powerful gale thrashes the sea into foam. The ship is saved by a thin margin, but saved it is. Note that there may not be any real-world equivalent to Desolation Island although there are two possibilities: Kerguelen Island or Heard Island. Once safely anchored, Leopard's hull is easily and rapidly patched. However, her forge had been cast overboard during the final flight from the Dutch ship and hence Aubrey is unable to effect repairs on the rudder's metal components. Desolation Island proves to have adequate food and forage. Maturin finds the location splendid and enjoys his stay.

The final component of the chapter deals with Maturin's manipulation of Herapath and Wogan and his planting of false information on Wogan. She carries the information away convinced of its authenticity. Obviously, Maturin has come to believe that Wogan will not reach Botany Bay.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Leopard unloads all her stores and easily repairs her hull. Desolation Island is plentiful in meat, eggs, and cabbage. While the crew works, Maturin visits a small island in the bay—it is so encumbered of strange life that Maturin christens it Paradise. He is usually accompanied by Bonden, Herapath, or both. Herapath often, however, takes advantage of Maturin's absence to dote upon Wogan and their romantic relationship blooms further. Once the hull is repaired, Aubrey attempts to remount a rudder—however, the ship's forge had been cast overboard to lighten ship during the chase of Waakhaamzeid. Without the forge, new iron straps and pins cannot be fashioned. After several failures, Aubrey prepares to over-winter and await eventual rescue. Fortunately, however, the American brig whaler La Fayette calls on Desolation Island to resupply with cabbage.

La Fayette has a forge but Aubrey cannot in good conscience request a favor—England and America are nearly at war. Likewise, Putnam, La Fayette's master, will not request favors from Aubrey. It devolves to Maturin to break the stalemate. Fortunately—in a way—La Fayette's crew is unhealthy and Putnam has a rotten tooth. Maturin provides medical attention and extracts the tooth, and then mentions that the use of the forge would be greatly appreciated. The forge is landed and loaned to the English crew for a few hours—enough time to make the mountings necessary to hang the new rudder. Leopard will soon enough be on her way again.

Meanwhile, Maturin has subtly informed Herapath—an American, it will be remembered—that should he gain the deck of La Fayette he would be free to leave with her; Aubrey would not risk an incident by boarding the American whaler. Maturin then subtly manipulates the situation such that while the entire crew of Leopard is busy hoisting the rudder Herapath is alone with Wogan. The couple, complete with the copied falsified information, takes to a rowboat and gains La Fayette just as the American whaler—complicit in the escape—hoists anchor and sets sail. Maturin watches them go and prevents Bonden from intervening in the escape. The novel thus ends with Leopard ready to sail and Maturin finally freed of his weighty intelligence responsibilities.

Chapter 10 Analysis

The novel's conclusion is peculiar in that Aubrey, Maturin, and Leopard remain effecting repairs on Desolation Island. In other words, the narrative of adventure ends mid-way through a sailing voyage. The appearance of an American whaler saves the English crew from over-wintering on an Antarctic island. Aubrey is too prideful to ask the Americans for help, but he is too pragmatic to prevent Stephen from arranging for help. Maturin's extensive medical assistance is greatly appreciated by the whalers who respond by allowing the English to use their forge to make metal parts to mount a new



rudder. Of particular note is Maturin's instructions to Herapath about caring for the whaling crew—it would be obvious to a normal person that Maturin expects Herapath to escape, but the transparent Herapath does not think in self-interested patterns. Maturin nearly commands the young lover to abscond to safety with Wogan though of course he arranges it in such a way that Herapath and Wogan are convinced that the very idea is theirs alone. The American captain is only too glad to beard the English, as he perceives it.

Of particular interest is the technical discussion concerning scurvy and Maturin's rather ridiculous speech regarding the desirability of flatulence. Indeed, the medical practices of the time are compelling and, one leaves one wondering about their efficacy. Maturin's restraint of Bonden's desire to recapture Wogan and Herapath concludes the novel. The Leopard's ultimate fate is of course taken up in the next novel in the series.



Characters

Jack Aubrey

Aubrey is one of two principle protagonists of the novel and shares the spotlight with his particular friend and confidant Stephen Maturin. Aubrey is a larger-than-life character with dash and charisma. He is an unchallenged and undoubted master in his element of the sea; a legendary captain, a masterful navigator, a superb tactician, and an undefeatable warrior. Although he is intelligent he relies more on experience, insight, and a nearly infallible instinct to carry him through the various perils he encounters.

Aubrey is a post captain assigned to take H.M.S. Leopard to Botany Bay, Australia, and there to retrieve the historic Captain Bligh. His sea voyage begins just in time, as Aubrey is a hopeless incompetent while ashore, speeding through his recent good fortune by investing wantonly in any number of harebrained schemes. Aubrey is married to the beautiful Sophie nee Williams and he dotes on her with vigor. He is entirely devoted to Sophie and, refreshingly, she to him—together they are the parents of three children.

Aubrey wears his blonde hair in a long queue and dresses as a traditional ship's captain. Aubrey is very athletic, possessed of an almost super-human vigor, great strength, and an incredible constitution. He is also particularly fond of food and drink, and Maturin often cautions him against becoming overly corpulent; his weight fluctuates widely. Aubrey is handsome and fairly useful, though his good-looks are marred by a variety of scars and combat-related wounds including an ear cruelly sliced apart in an old encounter and a vicious head wound which leaves a spectacular new scar along his forehead.

Stephen Maturin y Domanova

Maturin is one of two principle protagonists of the novel and shares the spotlight with his particular friend and confidant Jack Aubrey. Maturin is a quiet man who much prefers the closeness of a study to the attention of others; his personal expertise lies in the area of medicine and he is also a natural scientist of some repute. He is an unchallenged and undoubted master in his element of medicine and science and his medical opinions are surprisingly modern and always correct. Maturin has performed several miraculous cures through advanced techniques and is considered, by the crew, to hold life in the palm of his hand. Although possessed of some financial means, he cares nothing for the finer things in life and champions political causes that are obviously doomed simply because they are philosophically correct.

Maturin, in addition to being a physician and scientist, is a pro bono agent for the secret intelligence network of England. From time to time, Maturin's relationship with the intelligence service is complicated. This plot device is used to secure command of a



frigate for Aubrey and place Aubrey and Maturin together again in the current novel, where the bulk of the mission is in fact centered upon Maturin's intelligence work—though as usual Aubrey is entirely ignorant of it.

Maturin is a small, wiry man who in many respects is the antithesis of Aubrey. Maturin is much given to introspection, subtle interpretations, and Byzantine analysis of the current situation. He is nearly entirely mental, with little interest in things physical—though capable enough when the time comes. Although he is possessed of a nearly preternatural constitution, Maturin is not notably dexterous or strong, though his physique is rarely a handicap to his desires. Although he can be over-confident of his abilities, he is nearly always correct in his analysis of situations and people. A notable exception to his typical clarity of vision centers on his love interest, Diana Villiers; Maturin is unable to comprehend her complexities and unwilling to accept her rather obvious shortcomings. Like Aubrey, Maturin derives great pleasure from music and is a capable musician. He is a master surgeon and accomplished medical man, but his real love is the investigation of the natural world. Nearly every stop ashore finds Maturin eagerly gathering local flora and fauna and returning to the ship at the last possible instant.

Mrs. Louisa Wogan

Wogan is described as between twenty-five and thirty, with black hair and blue eyes. She stands straight and is 5'8", with a slight but noticeable figure. She speaks English and French, knows how to ride a horse, but has atrocious spelling and poor penmanship. Wogan has a passing likeness to Diana Villiers. Wogan is an American spy who has been apprehended by the English intelligence service. Rather than announce her as a spy, she is condemned for violently resisting arrest and sentenced to transportation to Botany Bay, Australia. She joins Leopard as a prisoner, though a distinguished one, and makes the transit to Desolation Island with resolute determination. Wogan is an obviously amateurish spy, however, and is quickly and entirely mastered by Maturin who casually—almost offhandedly—extracts all of her secrets and then uses her to plant credible but entirely false information into the hands of the fledgling American intelligence service. Wogan is apparently married to a man who usually acts as her pimp—their exact relationship is not disclosed but is rather pondered over by Maturin. In any event, Wogan has loose morals and uses her physical charms as a primary weapon in her arsenal of espionage.

Wogan begins the voyage as the object of lust for the entire male crew of Leopard, save Maturin who finds her physical charms a far second to Villiers, and Aubrey who retains his desires for Sophie alone. As the voyage continues, however, Wogan becomes quite beautiful to both Maturin and Aubrey and the two spend many hours contemplating her physical charms, as does the ship's minister and entire crew. Wogan leaves Leopard feeling that she has in fact escaped with a great deal of useful intelligence while in fact she has been let go with a parcel of frauds. Wogan is assisted in her escape by Michael Herapath, her sometimes lover and faithful devotee. Wogan is the dominant female character in the novel.



Michael Herapath

Herapath is an American citizen who holds a desperate and usually unrequited love for Louisa Wogan. The two characters have a long and fairly banal history together which Herapath recounts to Maturin during one night of moral anguish. Herapath has estranged, and even defrauded, his family by the pursuit of Wogan and from time to time the two have lived as husband and wife. Wogan always wanders off, however, when the money runs out or the occasion presents. Herapath subsequently pursues. Herapath is an intelligent man with a reedy physique that usually borders on the sickly. He is undernourished and delicate, though educated—he makes his living, such as it is, by translating Chinese. He stows away aboard *Leopard* so that he can follow Wogan and after he is discovered eventually becomes acting surgeon's assistant to Maturin. Maturin then easily manipulates the oblivious Herapath for his own ends, using the man to pass false information to Wogan. During one such surreptitious exchange, Herapath again gains Wogan's bed and impregnates her. The result is a sort of understanding, which one supposes to be fairly ephemeral.

Herapath eventually maneuvers to effect an escape for both himself and Wogan, and they seek sanctuary aboard an American whaler. Maturin, of course, arranges the entire episode. Herapath is a memorable character, though his ceaseless groveling for Wogan's attention is pitiable to the border of pathetic. In any event, his very survival aboard *Leopard* is a testament to his determination to secure the attention of his heart's desire. Herapath notes in passing that he is a war veteran, having served under General Washington and fought against the French in 1798.

Sophia

Sophie is a minor protagonist in the novel and one of a very few female characters presented. She is a beautiful and very devoted woman and the mother of three children: George, and Charlotte, and Fanny. She clearly understands finances better than her husband Jack Aubrey, yet would never dream of schooling him on his ridiculous financial practices. Sophie is committed to honesty and is in love with Aubrey and will hear nothing bad about him. Sophie is more fully developed as a character in several other novels of the series.

Diana Villiers

Villiers does not appear in the novel directly, but is thought about frequently by Maturin. She is exceptionally beautiful; indeed, physical beauty and sexual allure are clearly her dominant features and she easily controls most men through her physical charms. Even the usually resolute Maturin is smitten with her and irrationally holds out hope that she will return his fervent devotion. Instead, she cruelly uses him at every turn. Villiers is a major character in some other novels in the series, but here is only tangentially involved in the plot. As the novel opens, she is a passing acquaintance of Wogan.



Preserved Killick

Killick is Jack Aubrey's steward and has been a faithful if cantankerous servant for many years. Killick is keenly aware that his personal fortunes are inextricably linked to Aubrey's success and ensures that Aubrey is always presented in the most favorable circumstances attainable. Beyond professional interest, however, Killick is a loyal friend and defender of Aubrey and goes to great lengths to provide hot coffee, good food, plentiful drink, fresh fruit, clean clothing, and other amenities under often-difficult circumstances. Even so, Killick's irascible behavior and stunning insubordination are a constant but minor irritant to Aubrey. Killick often serves as a sort of comic relief within the narrative; his presumptuous and rude lines delivered in a whiny nasal tone set Aubrey's teeth on edge.

Barrett Bonden

Bonden is Aubrey's coxswain. He is easily the most dependable character in Aubrey's crew, even serving as manservant to Maturin and Aubrey while ashore. During the prolonged voyage from England to Desolation Island Bonden proves entirely reliable and resourceful. Bonden often fruitlessly attempts to educate Maturin on nautical terms and methods—a subject for which Maturin has a seemingly-purposefully blind eye. Bonden was born on the lower gun deck of the *Indefatigable*. Bonden also informs Maturin of negative happenings among the crew; Maturin then deals with the situations or carries the information to Aubrey, as appropriate.

Waakzaamheid's Captain

The Captain of *Waakzaamheid* is an unnamed Dutchman who much is admired by Aubrey. The Dutch captain locates *Leopard* and is thereafter prescient in determining the English ship's escape attempts. The captain proves Aubrey's equal in seamanship, intuition, and aggressive determination. Early in the prolonged chase, the Dutch captain launches an abortive attempt to board *Leopard* which ends in much loss of life—Aubrey surmises the Dutch captain's son must have been among the dead, which would certainly account for the captain's suicidal chase of *Leopard* into dangerous waters. In the end, the Dutch captain nearly kills Aubrey and loses his ship only due to Aubrey's dogged persistence.

Master Winthrop Putnam

William Putnam is master of *La Fayette*, an American brig whaler out of Nantucket. Putnam suffers from serious toothache and is more or less incapacitated when the whaler puts in to Desolation Island—several attempts to extract the rotten tooth have left a bleeding stump of a tooth. After Maturin extracts the tooth Putnam is much recovered and engages in a vituperative analysis of *Leopard* in specific and England in general. Putnam does allow Aubrey use of *La Fayette*'s forge in exchange for Maturin's

medical services, however. Later, Putnam is a willing accomplice in Wogan's and Herapath's escape from English custody—an escape engineered by Maturin.



Objects/Places

Sea-Fencibles

The sea-fencibles was a naval organization that putatively protected England from invasion by French forces during the Napoleonic Wars. The force was mostly composed of naval officers and volunteers. The entire English coast was divided into sections, each commanded by a Post-Captain. Aubrey starts the novel in the Sea-Fencibles prior to being transferred to H.M.S. Leopard.

Laudanum

Laudanum, or tincture of opium, is an alcoholic herbal extract of opium—in simple terms, it is nearly pure ethanol fortified with morphine. Throughout the novel, Maturin administers doses to patients as medically appropriate. He also battles his personal addiction to the drug, refraining from using it at the beginning of Leopard's voyage but succumbing to its addictive allure during the voyage. In the novel, Maturin refers occasionally to laudanum as being packaged in Winchester quarts.

H.M.S. Leopard

H.M.S. Leopard is a two-decker, fourth-rate, ship-of-the-line. Leopard carries fifty guns and is a fictionalized representation of the historic H.M.S. Leopard involved in the infamous Chesapeake-Leopard Affair, occurring June 22, 1807. During that incident the British ship attacked and boarded the American ship to press escaped British sailors. Leopard is the setting for virtually all the novel beyond Chapter 2. Leopard carries twenty-two twenty-four pounder cannon on the lower gun deck and twenty-two twelve-pounders on the upper deck, as well as four five-pounders on the quarterdeck. Additionally, Aubrey mounts two brass long nine-pounders as stern chasers—these two guns feature prominently in the latter half of the novel. Leopard's normal complement would be 343 men, including four lieutenants, three Marine officers, and ten midshipmen.

Her named complement includes Aubrey, captain; Maturin, surgeon; Martin, surgeon's assistant, dies of fever; Michael Herapath, stowaway and later acting surgeon's assistant, absconds with Wogan; Tom Pullings (leaves ship at Recife, Brazil); James Grant (becomes first lieutenant when Pullings leaves, later abandons ship); Heywood, Babbington, Turnbull (abandons ship), Byron (promoted from midshipman when Pullings leaves), lieutenants; Weatherby, Sommers, Needham, Holles, Forshaw, Combermere midshipmen; Larkin, master, murders John Condom Howard and later drowns; James Stokes, master's mate, dies of fever; Lane, bosun (probably abandons ship); David Allan and Arklow (probably abandons ship), bosun's mates; Burton, gunner; Bill, gunner's mate; Needham, clerk, dies of fever; Benton, purser, abandons ship; Barrett Bonden, coxswain; Moore, Marine captain; William Macpherson, Marine



lieutenant, dies of fever; John Condom Howard, murdered, Marine lieutenant; Preserved Killick, Captain's steward; Fisher, Reverend, abandons ship; Bob, carpenter; Alfred Gray, carpenter's mate; Cullen, captain of the foretop; Bill, Tom Davis, Joe Plaice, William Plaice, Boyle, Clarke, Atkins, Jacob Styles, Miller, Soames, Jackruski, Dukes, Craig, Cobb, James Hole, Thomas Paine, M. Lewis, Moses Harvey, Faster Doudle, crew; Jacob Hawley, ship's boy, dies of fever.

Gaol Fever

Gaol Fever strikes Leopard after she has been out of England several weeks. Doubtless, the disease was brought aboard by the prisoners. Maturin sees, but fails to recognize, the early symptoms of the disease when rats begin behaving strangely. The disease finally breaks out in full force just as Leopard enters the doldrums. The death rate is shockingly high with over one hundred fatalities and over sixty more seriously debilitated. Tom Pullings is rendered unfit to continue the voyage and, with many others, is eventually landed in Brazil to recuperate. Gaol Fever is today better known as typhus.

Waakzaamheid

Waakzaamheid is a Dutch ship-of-the-line, and a hostile opponent of Aubrey's Leopard. Aubrey is first warned of the Dutch ship at Recife, Brazil. Knowing that Leopard has almost no chance of surviving an encounter with the huge Dutch ship, Aubrey attempts to evade her. However, the Dutch captain proves cunning and insightful and pursues Leopard across the oceans, finally compelling a running fight through gale seas that ends with the destruction of Waakzaamheid.

The Weather Gauge

To have or possess 'the weather gauge' describes the favorable positioning of a sailing vessel relative to another with respect to the wind; in brief, it is any position upwind of the other vessel. Being upwind, or having the weather gauge, allows a vessel to maneuver at will toward any downwind point and thus gain the tactical advantage over other ships. Further, the ship having the weather gauge controls the timing and even the occurrence of military engagement. In general, correct tactics dictate that seeking the weather gauge is always an appropriate endeavor. For example, during the novel, Waakzaamheid gains the weather gauge on Leopard and uses the position to force the English ship far to the south.

Standing Rigging

The sailing ships presented in the novel are propelled by wind pressure against sails hung from spars. The masts and spars are supported in place by a complex series of lines and ropes collectively called the standing rigging (as opposed to the running rigging which moves to maneuver and control the sails). During Chapter 7, Aubrey



directs a complex manipulation of the standing rigging by running hawsers—heavy ropes—between the various masts and the rear of the ship. While this would make fine control difficult, it allows the running Leopard to carry an enormous press of sail without losing a mast during a gale. Aubrey's modification allows Leopard to keep ahead of Waakzaamheid during the final critical hours of the chase. The standing rigging would almost certainly have been restored to normal at Desolation Island.

Splinters

Naval combat between large ships was violent and dangerous, even though it rarely resulted in complete victory for either side. Waakzaamheid aside, ships rarely sank outright though they were sometimes captured. The chief weapon of naval engagement was the cannon—several types, weights, and configurations are noted in the novel. In general, cannons threw heavy iron balls—cannonballs—at the enemy. The cannonballs would strike the enemy ship's outer hull and cause enormous flocks of splinters to break away from the ship's inner hull. These splinters, traveling at great velocity, were the chief cause of injury and death among the ship's crew. The word "splinter" seems innocuous enough; however they were lethal and often very large. For example, near the end of the fight with Waakzaamheid a splinter knocks Aubrey to the ground, gashing open his head and giving him a concussion.

Desolation Island

Desolation Island is a tiny series of islands in the southern ocean used by Aubrey to base Leopard for repairs. The island is probably intended to be Kerguelen Island (though a later novel in the series states Desolation Island to have been Heard Island). Maturin finds the life ashore fabulous and compelling and names an islet in the bay Paradise. Desolation Island has plentiful wildlife and green leafy vegetables resembling cabbages. The island is the major setting for the final scenes of the novel. Aubrey's chart shows Desolation Island at 49°44'S and 69°E, though Aubrey believes it is as much as 10° away from the noted coordinates.

La Fayette

La Fayette is an American brig, a whaler out of Nantucket. She is captained by Winthrop Putnam, master, and is a typical whaler in nearly all respects. The ship appears at Desolation Island in Chapter 10 and allows Aubrey use of her forge in exchange for Maturin's medical attention. Later, La Fayette takes off Wogan and Herapath, concluding Maturin's plan.



Themes

Covert Operations

Much of the novel's plot is given over to a simple but subtle series of maneuvers designed to extract valuable intelligence from Wogan—an American spy—while simultaneously filling her with false information to carry back home. Indeed, the very reason Aubrey and Maturin are together on the voyage is to accompany Wogan through her transportation to Botany Bay. Aubrey's rather commonplace assignment is to transport Wogan to her prison destination. Maturin's subtle assignment is to compromise Wogan and extract any intelligence. In the end, the bluff Aubrey fails in his rather simple mission while Maturin succeeds beyond any reasonable expectation.

Much of the plot concerns Maturin's subtle manipulation of Michael Herapath in order to befriend the simple youth and then use him as a tool to access Wogan. Maturin simultaneously develops a banal but credible relationship with Wogan and, once she is compromised without knowing it, learns most, if not all, of her intelligence. Later still, Maturin takes advantage of his constructed situation to create a vast stockpile of false information and subsequently successfully deliver it to Wogan via Herapath. Maturin culminates his intelligence success by subtly arranging Wogan and Herapath's escape—complete with the poison pill of false intelligence. Throughout it all, Wogan believes that she is in fact manipulating Maturin and in any event believes him to be only a simple, if brilliant, ship's surgeon.

The High Seas

The novel's principle setting is the high seas during a time of war; Napoleon Bonaparte's military adventures threaten the British Empire and only a strong naval response keeps the French aggression at bay and ensures the survival of the empire. As a post captain of the Royal Navy, Jack Aubrey's sworn and obvious duty is to engage and destroy the enemy at every opportunity. He carries out this duty first with H.M.S. Leopard, engaging a larger Dutch ship and traveling around the world to execute his orders. Aubrey's particular friend Stephen Maturin also stands in opposition to the French, finding their governmental system tyrannical and offensive. He participates as an intelligence officer—a spy—in the defense of England.

The novel relates a partial sea voyage in the year c. 1809; although the voyage is fictional it contains many historical elements and the near sinking of Leopard is based upon a similar real-world accident. Captain Bligh's troubles at Botany Bay—colloquially known as the Rum Rebellion—began in January of 1808 and ended in early 1810. H.M.S. Leopard represents a lightly fictionalized ship of historical significance, though most of the English crew is entirely fictional—James Grant being perhaps based upon the historical James Grant. All aspects of the novel are related to sea adventure; most



of the action takes place at sea and even the action which takes place on land generally relates to the sea.

The strength and popular appeal of the novel is undoubtedly due to the nature of high seas adventure and the conversational way in which it is presented. Although full of accurate descriptions of lengthy nautical maneuvers and frequent technical descriptions of nautical equipment, the text is presented in an accessible and friendly manner which allows the reader to descend to deck-level and enjoy the excitement of days long gone.

The Nature of Friendship

The two protagonists of the novel, Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin, share the spotlight nearly equally. The two men have enjoyed a prolonged friendship which has developed slowly over the course of four previous novels. Their mutual confidence has survived conflict, suspicion, and even competition and emerged the stronger for it. Both men are able to haltingly share their innermost fears with the other, and their natures are such that their respective spheres of expertise complement the others' without conflict. Of course, this is limited with respect to Maturin's intelligence work. Aubrey admits the work is important, finds it distasteful, and ignores it insofar as he becomes aware of it.

The constantly developing nature of their friendship not only drives the tone and texture of the novel, but is also largely responsible for the novel's plot development. For example, the narrative must contrive to place both men on distinct missions that happen to coincide upon a single ship. Both men take every opportunity to further their friend's career, however, and this constant exchange of graces and friendship runs as a dominant thread throughout the novel—indeed throughout all of the novels of the series—and forms one of the most enjoyable themes present. Such a close male-male friendship, entirely devoid of homoeroticism, is indeed rare in modern fiction. Their friendship is perhaps enabled only by the nature of the environment used as the principle setting; that of a man-of-war on prolonged sea duty.

This theme is echoed in many minor relationships throughout the novel—for example, the friendship developed between Maturin and Herapath and, to a lesser and more complicated extent, between Maturin and Wogan. Many of the crewmen are illustrated as having close friendships as well. Indeed, their friendship serves them well during the disabling of Leopard.

Style

Point of View

The novel is told from the third-person, limited, point of view. The narrator is reliable, entirely effaced, and unnamed. Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin, the main characters, are the protagonists and central figures in all of the scenes in the novel. The narrator divulges some internal thoughts of the two protagonists, but not of other characters. The majority of the story is told through action and dialogue; revealed thoughts are very infrequent and are used for characterization rather than plot development. Occasional letters or journal entries, such as those found in Chapter 4, allow for some first-person introspection without destroying the cadence of the overall narrative structure.

The third-person point of view allows Aubrey and Maturin to be presented in a highly sympathetic manner. For example, the narrative structure portrays Maturin's penurious manners as frugal rather than stingy. The narrative also allows portrayal of characters' life situations as difficult but not pathetic. In this way, the choice of narrative view is appropriate and successful. As both characters are roughly equal in significance, the third-person point of view also allows their textual representations to be roughly equivalent. Indeed, the structure of the novel and the method of plot development nearly require the use of a third-person point of view. Finally, the frequent appearance of minor characters is allowed through the point of view selected; it is carried throughout all of the novels of the series and is accessible and successful.

Setting

The novel features two primary types of settings. The first and most significant is aboard *Leopard*, a British warship. The ship is captained by Aubrey, officered by Pullings, Babbington, and others, and crewed by a rag-tag assortment of British seamen, pressed lubbers, and a motley assortment of other nationalities. One of the novel's achievements is the presentation of shipboard life as something intriguing and even desirable while simultaneously presenting a realistic view of the often horrible hardships endured.

The second setting presented in the novel is diffuse and consists of numerous ports, cities, and islands. Included among these settings are Ashgrove Cottage, in England, a few ports of call on the voyage—Cape Verdes and Recife, Brazil, and of course Desolation Island itself. In general, these settings are transient, poorly described, and thought of—at least by Aubrey—as temporary locations to refit and re-supply. While the action aboard ship is dominated by Aubrey, the action ashore is usually dominated by Maturin. When time permits, Maturin goes ashore and usually has an experience of minor adventure, returning to the ship with a collection of natural history specimens. At Desolation Island he is afforded a prolonged stay and uses the time to blend natural history research with intelligence operations.



Language and Meaning

The novel's language is generally simply and accessible. Standard punctuation is used to indicate dialogue and interior thoughts and descriptive text are easily distinguished. Most of the places, some of the objects, and even some of the events referenced in the narrative are identifiable as real geographical locations or historic events. It is notable that the novel was originally written and published in England and uses standard English punctuation and spelling styles which may somewhat unfamiliar to American readers.

The novel becomes linguistically complex in two primary respects. First, when dealing with nautical events a somewhat complicated specialized language is used which includes references to various parts of sailing craft and sailing techniques which are probably not particularly familiar to modern readers. The technical language is accurate and interesting and a reference to a general sailing encyclopedia will assist in a careful reading and complete understanding of the text. Second, the novel makes frequent reference to various events which occur prior to the novel's opening, proper. In many cases, these events are detailed in a prior novel in the series and readers unfamiliar with these novels may find the references vague or puzzling.

Structure

The 325-page novel is divided into ten numbered chapters of roughly equal length. The narrative is presented in strictly chronological order with each chapter's events occurring after the events in the previous chapter and before the events in the subsequent chapter. Of course references to previous events occur with some frequency and characters from time to time think about future events. Such deviations from the principle timeline are minor and are clearly identifiable as such. Thus, the novel's principle timeline is accessible and easily followed.

The novel is intended to be read as part of a series of novels; specifically as the fifth novel in a series which extends to twenty volumes. Many of the principle characters presented in the novel, therefore, are recurring characters with backgrounds and histories developed in a prior novel—Wogan and Herapath being the primary exceptions. Similarly, events happening prior to the scope of the current novel are often referenced. This structure may prove somewhat difficult for readers unfamiliar with the prior novels. Nevertheless, basic character glosses and event recaps are provided.

The structure is further complicated by adherence to historical events. In broad terms, events in the novel are fictional or fictionalized events which could have occurred, or did occur, in the period of time used as the novel's setting; namely, the war between England and France during the year c. 1809. Thus, the novel's language, technology, politics, geography, et cetera, are all based upon historically accurate representations.



Quotes

The breakfast parlour was the most cheerful room in Ashgrove Cottage, and although the builders had ruined the garden with heaps of sand and unslaked lime and bricks, and although the damp walls of the new wing in which this parlour stood still smelt of plaster, the sun poured in, blazing on the covered silver dishes and lighting the face of Sophie Aubrey as she sat there waiting for her husband. A singularly lovely face, with the lines that their earlier poverty had marked upon it quite smoothed away; but it had a somewhat anxious look. She was a sailor's wife, and although the Admiralty in the goodness of its heart had allowed her the company of her husband for a surprising length of time, appointing him (much against his will) to the command of the local Sea-Fencibles in recognition of his services in the Indian Ocean, she knew that this period was coming to an end. (p. 5)

He made some objection: but no, he might not go upstairs—his room was being turned out—there were pails and brooms that he might trip on in the dark—so there he sat staring at the fire, until the scent of fresh-brewed coffee filled the room, and he turned his chair to the table.

His post consisted of The Syphilitic Preceptor, with the author's compliments, and the Philosophical Transactions. After two strong cups that quelled the trembling, he automatically ate what Lucy set before him, the whole of his attention being set upon by a paper by Humphry Davy on the electricity of the torpedo-fish. "How I honour that man," he murmured, taking up another chop. And there was that quacksalver Mellowes again, with his pernicious theory that consumption was caused by an excess of oxygen. He read the specious nonsense through, to confound the arguments one by one. "Have I not already ate a chop?" he asked, seeing the chafing-dish renewed.

"It was only a little one, sir," said Lucy, laying another upon his plate. "Mrs. Broad says there is nothing like a chop for strengthening the blood. But it must be ate up while it's hot." She spoke kindly but firmly, as to one who was not quite exactly: Mrs. Broad and she knew that he had eaten nothing on his journey, that he had taken neither supper nor breakfast, and that he had lain in his damp shirt.

Deep in toast and marmalade, he demolished Mellowes root and branch; and noticing the indignation with which his hand had underlined the whole claptrap peroration, he observed, "I am not dead." (pp. 51-52)

Stephen had the clearest recollection of dear old Surprise in the roaring forties; and he closed his eyes: yet on the other hand, those were the albatross latitudes. "Tell me," he said, having thought, "how does it come about that Mr. Grant was not promoted for this feat? For feat it was, sure, with so small a ship?"

"She was a brig, Stephen," said Jack. "A brig. But a feat it was, as you say, particularly as she was one of those vile things with sliding keels; and after that wicked Polychrest I never wish to see another as long as I live. As for promotion," he went on evasively, "why, promotion is a tricky affair at the best of times, and I believe Grant contrived to get the wrong side of the civilians, both over there and at home. He fouled their hawse, and they cut his cable: perhaps he may not have all the tact in the world. I think there was



some other cause of dissatisfaction too, because at one time he was put at the bottom of the lieutenants' list, and that is why I was able to have Tom Pullings as my premier, he being now senior to Grant. But be damned to all that," he cried, reaching for his violin, his sea-going fiddle, for his precious Amati was not to be exposed to the tropical heat, the Antarctic cold. "Killick! Killick, there! Bear a hand." (p. 114)

It happened to be a Saturday, judgement day, and at six bells in the forenoon watch the bosun and his mates uttered their dismal pipe; all hands flocked aft, where each watch gathered in an amorphous heap on its respective side of the quarterdeck; nothing could induce them to form in an orderly group, except at divisions, nor to take their hands from their pockets, and they stood in *dégagé* attitudes, gazing at the Marines, drawn up in scarlet perfection on the poop with fixed bayonets, at the grating rigged against the break, and at the officers and young gentlemen assembled behind their Captain, all wearing their gold-laced hats and swords or dirks. The master-at-arms brought up his prisoners: three cases of drunkenness—grog stopped for a week, and ordered to pump ship for four, six, and eight hours during their watches below: a Turk, caught stealing four pounds of tobacco and a silver watch, the property of Jacob Styles, yeomen of the sheets: the goods produced, sworn to, the case proved, the prisoner mute. (p. 119)

"What a romantic though. But if he is shot of the lady, why should he perish away? People do not die of love, you know."

"Do they not, ma'am? I have known them brought pretty low, however, and to take to mighty strange courses, ruin their happiness, career, prospects, reputation, honour, estate, and wits, break with their families and their friends, run mad. But in this case, I fear he may perish away not so much from a wounded heart, as from an empty belly. You cannot conceive the promiscuity of the seaman's life, nor its total lack of privacy. The seaman, upon the whole, are a very decent set of men; but to one bred up in a different way of life, their company can be strangely burdensome. What they eat, for example, and their way of eating it—the noise, the open-mouthed champing, the primitive gestures, the borborygms, the belching, the roaring jocularities, the—I will spare you many aspects, but I assure you that to an educated man, who has no very robust vital principle, who knows nothing of the sea except perhaps the Dover packet, who has lived, retired, and who has been much reduced by unhappiness, all these things together can bring about a morbid state, an anorexy; and he may literally starve in the midst of plenty. Poor Herapath—for Herapath is his name—is already skin and bone. I feed him up with my portable soup, and the Captain sent him a chicken from his table; but I look to see him buried, bone alone, before he can come to relish... The bell! The bell! Come, there is not a moment to be lost." (p. 140)

The Leopard had lost the north-east trades in 12°30'N., far earlier than Jack had expected: he resisted the notion of total loss as long as he could, but presently he was forced to admit that it was so, that this year the doldrums had moved farther north than usual, and that his ship was in them, well in, having carried the declining breath of the true breeze right down to its last expiring waft. Day after day she lay there with her head all round the compass, inanimate, her sails hanging limp, sometimes rolling so that most



hands were sick all over again, rolling so heavy that he struck her topgallantmasts before she could send them overboard, sometimes motionless; and all day long the heat beat down from a veiled sun. The air was thick, with no refreshment even in the morning watch; lightning flickered all round the night horizon; and sometimes by night but more often by day, warm rain came down so hard and thick that the men on the deck could hardly breathe and the scuppers on either side spurted water as though from a powerful hose. (p. 146)

"A burton-tackle to the chess-tree," he called, loud and clear. "Lead aft to a snatch-block fast to the aftermost ring-bolts and forward free. Look alive, there, look alive. Light along that snatch-block, Craig." Order came from apparent confusion in five minutes: the half-drowned bosun's party scrambled in from the chess-trees; and the whole ship's company crowded into the waist and along the gangways, standing by the cablets that were to act as horizontal falls, working with a threefold power.

"Silence fore and aft," cried Jack. "Starboard, tally on. At the word, now, and all together cheerly: like a bowline. Ho, one. Ho, two. Ho, belay. Larboard, clap on. Ho, one. Ho, two. Ho, belay."

So it went, on either side: short sharp pulls aft from the chess-trees, forward from the snatch-blocks, and the hawsers tightened evenly, tighter and tighter yet, a most careful balancing of forces, until the wind sung the same note in each, and each pair was iron-taut, supporting its mast with extraordinary strength.

"Belay," cried Jack for the last time. "Well fare ye, lads. Are ye ready, Mr. Lane?"

"Ready, aye ready, sir."

"Cast off all. Maintopgallantsail, there." (pp. 224-225)

On hands and knees he felt for the train-tackle in the smoke, found it as the darkness cleared, and tallied on. But for a moment he could not understand the cheering that filled the cabin, deafening his ears: then through the shattered deadlights he saw the Dutchman's foremast lurch, lurch again, the stays part, the mast and sail carry away right over the bows.

The Leopard reached the crest. Green water blinded him. It cleared, and through the bloody haze running from his cloth he saw the vast breaking wave with the Waakzaamheid broadside on its curl, on her beam-ends, broached to. An enormous, momentary turmoil of black hull and white water, flying spars, rigging that streamed wild for a second, and then nothing at all but the great hill of green-grey with foam racing upon it.

"My God, oh my God," he said. "Six hundred men." (p. 236)

After a pause in which nothing emerged Stephen said, "You must put on the warmest garments you possess before your walk, which I must ask you to take early today, with Mr. Herapath. You have looked yellowish and peaked these last days, and the air is extremely raw. I recommend two pairs of stockings, two pairs of drawers, drawn well up about the belly, and a pelisse."

"Upon my word, Dr. Maturin," said Mrs. Wogan, starting to laugh. "Upon my word, you are beyond the pale of humanity. You tell me I am not good in looks, and you name



what cannot be named."

"I am a physician, child: at times my office sets me as far beyond the human pale as the tonsure sets a priest."

"So medical men do not look upon their patients as beings of the same race with themselves?"

"Let me put it thus: when I am called in to a lady, I see a female body, more or less deranged in its functions. You will say that it is inhabited by a mind that may partake of its distress, and I grant your position entirely. Yet for me the patient is not a woman, in the common sense. Gallantry would be out of place, and what is worse, unscientific."

"It would grieve me to be a mere deranged female in your eyes," said Mrs. Wogan, and Stephen observed that for the first time in their acquaintance her composure was far from entire. "Yet... do you recall that at the beginning of this voyage you were so indiscreet as to ask whether I might be confined?" Stephen nodded. "Well," said she, twisting a piece of blue wool, "were you to ask me now, I should be obliged to say yes, perhaps." (p. 243)

"Wednesday, 24 December. Course estimated E 15°S. Latitude estimated 46°30'S. Longitude 49°45'E. First part, fresh breezes at WNW, latter parts calm and fine. People employed pumping and thrumming spritsail to fother ship. Water one and half foot above orlop beams forward, one foot amidship and aft.

"Thursday, 25 December. Course estimated E 10°S. Latitude observed 46°37'S. Longitude estimated 50°15'E. Winds light and variable with haze and rain. Sea calm with several small blocks of ice. PM hauled up foresail, veered out stop-water to check ship's way, and passed fothering-sail forward from abaft the sternpost, bowsing it taut from the fashion-pieces to the mizen-chains. The sail answered and the pumps gained five foot in the day." (p. 262)

"To tell the truth, sir, I believe I had rather sit in the shelter for a while. The cabbage seems to have turned my inward parts to water."

"Nonsense," said Stephen, "it is the most wholesome cabbage I have ever come across in the whole of my career. I hope, Mr. Herapath, that you are not going to join in the silly weak womanish unphilosophical mewling and puling about the cabbage. So it is a little yellow in certain lights, so it is a little sharp, so it smells a little strange: so much the better, say I. At least that will stop the insensate Phaeacian hogs from abusing it, as they abuse the brute creation, stuffing themselves with flesh until what little brain they have is drowned in fat. A virtuous esculent! Even its boldest detractors, ready to make the most hellish declarations and to swear through a nine-inch plank that the cabbage makes them fart and rumble, cannot deny that it cured their purpurae. Let them rumble till the heavens shake and resound again; let them fart fire and brimstone, the Gomorrhans, I will not have a single case of scurvy on my hands, the sea-surgeon's shame, while there is a cabbage to be culled." (p. 289)

"...Sir, sir, it's Mrs. Wogan! She's skipped her bail! Shall I shove off and bring 'em back?" "No," said Stephen. "Sit still and keep quiet."



The boat came nearer still, passed within whispering distance, and the moon shone on their faces, delighted, ingenuous, and absurdly young. It passed on; swung into the black shadow of the whaler's side. Some low cries from the La Fayette—"Get a good hold on the lines, ma'am, and mind your petticoats—easy, all, as she rises"—and then, as the brig swung to the breeze and gathered way, Mrs. Wogan's laugh, floating clear across the water, very cheerful and amused, more amused than ever, so amused that both Stephen and Bonden chuckled aloud; and now, for the first time, it had a fine triumphant ring. (p. 325)



Topics for Discussion

The novel presents two primary plot-lines—Aubrey pursues an obvious military voyage while Maturin executes a subtle intelligence operation. Discuss the narrative balance of the two plot-lines; is the book balanced? Do the two plot-lines complement each other? Which plot-line do you find more enjoyable, and why?

Why do you think Aubrey and Maturin are such close friends? Do you think their friendship would be able to weather any interpersonal storm?

Aubrey seems to be a master of the sea but quickly falls apart when ashore, making bad decisions and spending money foolishly. Do you think that Aubrey would ever be able to retain a sizeable estate if left ashore for many years?

After reading the novel, does the life of a common seaman—perhaps that of James Hole, disciplined for drunkenness—seem appealing to you? In your opinion, which class of sailors has the best situation—seamen, midshipmen, Marines, officers, or the captain?

Maturin makes numerous veiled references to opiates and holds a lengthy discussion with Herapath—himself a one-time user—about addiction. Discuss the elements of Maturin's character which lead to his secret reliance on drugs.

Do you consider Jack Aubrey to be the epitome of what a Royal Navy captain should embody? Why or why not?

Maturin feels that his manipulation of Herapath and Wogan is entirely successful and also entirely distasteful. Do you think that intelligence and counter-intelligence operations, such as those described in the novel, are inherently immoral?

Chapter 10 presents the American brig La Fayette. Her American officers and crew show a distinctive blend of belligerence and friendliness toward the Englishmen of Leopard. Discuss this rare appearance of American sailors in the series of novels—does the author portray Americans accurately? Why or why not?