

The Truelove Study Guide

The Truelove by Patrick O'Brian

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Plot Summary

Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin continue their voyage aboard the private man-of-war *Surprise*, hired on Royal Navy service. They depart Port Jackson and make course for the isle of Moahu where French influence is threatening British interests. Their mission is successful but seriously disrupted by the presence of Clarissa Oakes, a young female stowaway who causes contention among the crew and officers.

Captain Jack Aubrey commands the private man-of-war *Surprise*, hired by the Royal Navy. *Surprise* has been recently refitted and supplied at Port Jackson, New South Wales, Australia, and departs for England during the year 1813. The British Empire is at war with Napoleon's France and France's ally the United States of America. Aubrey has a long history of successful military operations. Also aboard ship is Aubrey's close friend and confidant Stephen Maturin, the ship's surgeon and naturalist extraordinaire. Maturin is also an agent in the Royal Navy's intelligence network. The two men have known each other for years and have sailed with each other through many difficult commissions. Maturin is joined by another friend and associate, the Reverend Nathaniel Martin, who acts as the surgeon's assistant.

A few days out of Port Jackson Aubrey discovers a stowaway—a young woman named Clarissa Harvill who has escaped the penal colony near Port Jackson with the assistance of Midshipman William Oakes. An angry Aubrey declares he will maroon the two young lovers on the forbidding Norfolk Island. After a good night's sleep, Aubrey's temper cools, and when HMS *Éclair* appears and gives chase, Aubrey assumes the cutter has come to recover the stowaway prisoner, and he seeks to evade the ship. As it becomes apparent that *Éclair* cannot be avoided, Clarissa agrees to marry Oakes, an act that makes her a free woman. Martin performs the ceremony for Clarissa who wears a scarlet silk dress made from the only elegant material aboard. As it turns out *Éclair* is not in pursuit of escaped felons but instead delivers new orders for *Surprise*. Thus, Aubrey makes course for the distant island of Moahu to assist English whalers who are being persecuted by a French-crewed American-flagged privateer.

As the weeks and months go by Clarissa proves to be agreeable to sexual advances from many of the crew. Two of the mates and some other sailors become jealous of her sexual attentions, even as Oakes rails against his new wife's infidelity. Aubrey, Maturin, and Martin all resist but all secretly burn with sexual desire. The crew thus becomes divided into various factions and tensions mount. At the end of this period Maturin learns that Clarissa's previous life consisted of sexual abuse as a child and then years of prostitution as a child and poverty-stricken young woman. She had been transported for murder, and she proves an extraordinarily complicated personality. As Aubrey strives to maintain control aboard a divided ship, Martin deliberately distances himself from the woman, and Maturin struggles to understand her.

Surprise finally reaches Moahu, and after a brief battle ashore British interests are established and the French are driven out. During the action *Surprise* captures *Truelove*, a fur-trading ship packed with valuable cargo. Aubrey at once sees the



solution to his problem and appoints the reliable Oakes commander of Truelove, sending him away with his wife to the nearest British port where the prize will be condemned and sold. The novel thus ends with Surprise recovering from a divisive period but looking forward to a brighter future.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin continue their voyage aboard the private man-of-war *Surprise*, hired on Royal Navy service. They depart Port Jackson and make course for the isle of Moahu where French influence is threatening British interests. Their mission is successful but seriously disrupted by the presence of Clarissa Oakes, a young female stowaway who causes contention among the crew and officers.

Surprise sails from Port Jackson, Australia, and makes course for England. Captain Jack Aubrey stands on the quarterdeck and ponders events of the previous weeks. He recalls *Surprise*'s visit to Port Jackson and political difficulties encountered because of Stephen Maturin's involvement in a dispute of honor. Aubrey also is angry that Maturin's assistant, Padeen Coleman, is aboard the ship. Padeen had been a prisoner at a penal colony for serious crimes, but Maturin had smuggled him aboard *Surprise*. Aubrey, unwittingly and unknowingly, had given his word to the governor that no stowaways were aboard. As Aubrey contemplates the past few weeks ashore, he is glad to be at sea once again, where life is simple, he ruminates. He then reflects on the situation of *Surprise*, a sixth-rate frigate sold out of the Royal Navy and originally purchased by Maturin, though now Aubrey is both owner and captain. The ship has been on government service, and upon returning to England Aubrey anticipates a posting to a Royal Navy ship of much larger size, but for now, he is happy to be captain of a private man-of-war. Meanwhile Stephen Maturin, the ship's surgeon, consults with several patients in sickbay. One of the patients has been to Norfolk Island and another to Easter Island. They compete for Maturin's attentions by telling various anecdotes and tall tales about their respective islands of familiarity. Maturin hopes to visit both islands in the not-too-distant future.

A few days out of Port Jackson sees *Surprise* readied at divisions for the first at-sea inspection by the captain. Aubrey notes much merriment and amusement among the crew and feels it is a little strange. Even so, the inspection proceeds well and Aubrey finds the ship in excellent order. He then goes below with Tom Pullings, the first mate, and inspects the cable tiers. There they startle a person who is eventually discovered to be a young woman named Clarissa Harvill. Aubrey, nonplussed at the appearance of a stowaway, continues his inspection. He now realizes about what the merriment and amusement had been. Later Aubrey confers with Pullings in the privacy of the great cabin. Pullings admits to having unofficially known that a woman was on board but also asserts that he never became officially aware; in any case, the woman was smuggled aboard by Midshipman William "Billy" Oakes. Aubrey is much put out and publicly states his intention of marooning Oakes and Clarissa on Norfolk Island.



Chapter 1 Analysis

Chapter 1 establishes the time and place of the novel—c. 1813 on a British ship during a time of prolonged war with France and introduces several of the novel's primary characters, including Clarissa, Aubrey and Maturin, as well as numerous minor characters. The chapter also recounts Aubrey's and Maturin's recent troubles and experiences—happenings treated at greater length in a previous novel in the series. The chapter also introduces *Surprise*, Aubrey's favorite ship, and establishes that it is now a private man-of-war owned by Aubrey. Clarissa is a convicted felon—a murderer, actually—who has been transported to the penal colony at Botany Bay. She has spent at least some time there before meeting up with Oakes and stowing away aboard *Surprise*. The system of prisoner transportation was often used during the period of history in which the novel is set. Padeen is also a prisoner. Botany Bay, Port Jackson, Norfolk Island, and even Governor Macquarie are real, historic settings. Aubrey's threat to maroon Oakes and Clarissa on Norfolk Island is serious; the place had been an infamous penal colony until c. 1813, and recently deserted, and thus they would face a prolonged stay with an uncertain future. Aubrey and Maturin discuss the famous Norfolk Pine, a huge and odd tree that was found to be remarkably unsuitable as a material for shipbuilding.

Note the dialogue between Maturin's two patients as they try to outdo each other regarding the islands with which they have respective first-hand experience. The fact that Maturin earnestly hopes to visit both places is heavy foreshadowing that he will not visit either; this is a kind of running narrative joke throughout the entire series of novels. The theme is reiterated later in the novel when Maturin begins to dream about landing in Fiji; needless to say, he doesn't get to visit the island. Maturin always wants to go ashore at exotic places but usually only gets to do so more or less by accident. In fact, his landing on Norfolk Island is prevented by Clarissa's appearance. Instead, Maturin will go ashore at Annamooka and Moahu, but on both islands most of his time will not be his own.



Chapters 2 and 3

Chapters 2 and 3 Summary

After a good night's sleep aided by a surreptitiously administered dose of laudanum, Aubrey and the crew flood the ballast and then pump out the seawater every morning. This cleans out the ballast and effectively washes the inside bottom of the ship. After pumping Aubrey goes swimming and eats breakfast. Norfolk Island is closed and Aubrey sends Bonden to scout out the shore and determine if a landing is possible. Maturin notes that Aubrey and Bonden seem to have a private understanding before Bonden sets off. The crew watches Bonden navigate along the shore and through the surf. When he returns he reports that a safe landing is not at all possible: Oakes and Clarissa will not be put ashore and Surprise will not stop at Norfolk Island. Shortly thereafter a sail is sighted, and Aubrey quickly determines Surprise is being pursued by a British cutter—he assumes the cutter is trying to recover stowaways and orders Surprise to ignore the cutter and sail away. Meanwhile Aubrey speaks privately with Oakes, who desires to marry Clarissa even though there will be professional repercussions. Clarissa agrees to the ceremony. Aubrey has a bolt of silk, unfortunately scarlet, and this is the material used to make Clarissa's wedding dress. Several hours later Reverend Nathaniel Martin marries Oakes and Clarissa, dressed as the scarlet woman.

In the morning the chasing ship, HMS *Éclair*, captained by M'Mullen,, closes the distance. Aubrey is incorrect, however, as the ship is not chasing stowaways but instead delivers sacks of mail and fresh orders for Surprise. Surprise is ordered to sail to the island of Moahu and intervene in a minor civil war that is threatening British fur-trading interests in the region. As Surprise points on to her new course, Aubrey holds a wedding dinner for the bride. Both Aubrey and Maturin find Clarissa charming, garrulous, polite, demure, and enjoyable, but they also both privately comment that she is no great beauty.

In Chapter 3 Surprise crosses the equator as Aubrey and Maturin read their letters from home. Aubrey's mail includes a vast amount of estate and legal papers that he begins to sort through. He discovers that his land holdings have several opportunities for clergy and he discusses Martin's suitability with Maturin. Later, Maturin discusses the situation with Martin, and finally Aubrey makes a formal offer to Martin who accepts. Clarissa begins to call upon Maturin as a physician. At first she exhibits vague symptoms and fears she may be pregnant or suffering from venereal disease, neither of which is true. She confides in Maturin that she detests children. During this period a deep division occurs between Davidge and West, the 2nd and 3rd mate; they publicly argue, privately feud, and cause deep divisions among the ship's crew. Maturin learns they are to pass close to Fiji and holds out hopes of visiting the island, but the wind does not prove fair. After several weeks of sailing Maturin begins to spend the evenings on the deck chatting with Clarissa. On one instance Davidge finds Maturin's presence objectionable and insults the doctor. As the weeks go by Aubrey begins to have erotic dreams about



Clarissa, even as he writes letters stating she is no great beauty. When not commanding the ship, Aubrey is usually engaged sorting through his estate papers.

Normally, the officers of *Surprise* would host a dinner party for Oakes and Clarissa to celebrate their wedding. A gross insufficiency of suitable food has prevented this observance for several weeks. Fortunately *Surprise* encounters a swordfish—the crew tells Maturin the fish has pierced the ship, and he wonders if they are teasing him—and Awkward Davies harpoons it. Thus, the celebration dinner is planned and the great swordfish will be served.

Chapters 2 and 3 Analysis

Chapter 2 presents a narrative contrivance to force the marriage of Oakes and Clarissa—the British cutter is interpreted as a threat to Clarissa and Padeen. Aubrey suspects the ship has been sent to recover the stowaways. Padeen must be hidden, but if Clarissa marries Oakes, she will be legally protected from further imprisonment. Thus, Aubrey permits Martin to marry the couple. As it turns out, this was not strictly necessary, as the British cutter is unconcerned—and unaware—that *Surprise* harbors stowaways. Instead, *Éclair* clarifies the central narrative paradigm of the novel, a play on words as the word is derived from the Latin "to make bright" or clear. The most-obvious symbol in the entire novel is Clarissa's wedding dress—she is, quite literally, married as the scarlet woman. Although as yet no one on board knows of her past life or future actions, the color of her wedding gown proves to be entirely correct and a bit of foreshadowing. It is significant that both Aubrey and Maturin conclude that Clarissa is young, slim, and graceful, and yet not a great beauty. After spending months at sea, however, the only woman aboard will come to look beautiful indeed to both men. At one time Norfolk Island was used as a penal colony with a reputation as the worst of the worst, but by the time of the novel the colony had been abandoned. The giant Norfolk pines historically were found to be singularly unsuitable as lumber for spars, explaining Aubrey's comments about the trees.

Chapter 3 develops the first conflicts among the crew, focused in the feud between Davidge and West that will consume *Surprise* over the coming months. The initial hints of this come during Clarissa's visit to Maturin as physician, when she confides a fear of pregnancy and venereal disease. Although she has neither condition, she apparently is suffering from something as Maturin administers a rather obscure treatment. This encounter effectively breaks the ice between Maturin and Clarissa and they begin to while away the evening hours in idle conversation on the open deck. Maturin's inadvertent domination of Clarissa's public time angers Davidge who flings an insult at Maturin. The usually observant Maturin does not interpret Davidge's barb as a result of jealousy, however. By this time it also fairly is evident that the division between Davidge and West is a result of jealousy: the symbolism of Clarissa's scarlet wedding gown is obviously appropriate. Of course, being alone at sea for months easily could lead many men to inappropriate passions—even Aubrey begins to have erotic dreams about the only woman in thousands of miles.



Chapters 4 and 5

Chapters 4 and 5 Summary

Surprise is put into tip-top shape and spread with bunting for a holiday celebration. Humorously, the Sweeting girls cry out in admiration for Guy Fawkes. The crew celebrates with gusto. Later that evening the officers hold the wedding feast and celebration for Oakes and Clarissa. Aubrey and Maturin both note an odd feeling as the newlyweds enter the room. Clarissa wears her scarlet wedding dress, modified somewhat into an evening gown, and all eyes are upon her. Martin is particularly reserved and proper nearly to the point of being rude. Midshipman Reade, heretofore dazzled by and supportive of Clarissa, drinks uncharacteristically heavily and eventually passes out and slides under the table. The dinner conversation is exceptionally strained and stilted—only Aubrey and Clarissa speak freely. Clearly Oakes, West, and Davidge are upset about something. Clarissa eventually draws the men into conversation about naval battles and experiences and though the evening is far from enjoyable it is not a complete catastrophe. Later that night Aubrey and Maturin play backgammon and Aubrey fumes about the poor showing of his officers; he realizes that something is seriously amiss within the ship's crew but does not know precisely what it is. Over the next few days both men re-read letters from home and write letters. Aubrey continues to spend much time sorting through his voluminous estate papers.

In Chapter 5, a storm arises and Aubrey works the crew mercilessly, pushing Surprise as hard as he knows how. During the dirty weather Midshipman Reade falls and lands on a marlinspike; the steel implement pierces his chest near the heart, causing exceptional pain. Maturin draws the spike and sews the wound closed. As Reade, quartered across from Clarissa, begins to lose consciousness he confides in Maturin regarding the crew's access to Clarissa's cabin "...they go in and out of that door, like a bawdy house" (p. 123). After the storm blows over Aubrey continues to press the crew hard; Clarissa does not appear at breakfast for several days, and Oakes claims she fell during the storm and wounded her face. Maturin calls on her and sees she has a livid black eye, obviously caused by being punched—Oakes has beat Clarissa.

Finally, Surprise arrives at the island of Annamooka and receives a friendly reception, and a local sailor provides much information about Moahu. The island is roughly hourglass-shaped; the North end is ruled by Kalahua and features a good harbor named Pabay; the South end is ruled by Puolani, the rightful ruler of the whole island; the halves are divided by a belt of mountainous jungle; the French support Kalahua. Aubrey, quite obviously, decides to support Puolani. Aubrey also learns that Truelove, a fur-trading ship, has been captured as a prize and lies at Pabay, and that Franklin, a heavy privateer flying an American flag, is crewed by Frenchmen and is in the area. The stay at Annamooka is occasioned by formal dinners, exchange of news, and a humorous discussion of hydrophobia (rabies).



Chapters 4 and 5 Analysis

The celebration feast of Chapter 4 is surely the novel's finest writing and the subtle undertones and strained dialogue clearly illustrate the various viewpoints and overall paradigm obtaining aboard ship. Aubrey is unaware and supports Clarissa openly, which surely demoralizes Oakes and confuses Martin. Maturin is aware but uncaring, preferring to let others take care of their own situations. Clarissa, the scarlet woman, appears partly unaware of the jealousies she has fostered in the closed society and attempts to carry the evening by acting charming. Martin, ashamed of his own desires, withdraws into protocol and silence. Oakes is sullen; Reade drowns his sorrows; West and Davidge eye each other with animosity. Pullings sits confused and indecisive. Later in the evening Aubrey plumbs Maturin, unsuccessfully as usual, for more information about the, to him, strange ordeal. At least the fish is well-cooked.

The action of Chapter 5 results largely from the failed dinner celebration. Aubrey decides the only way to knit the crew into an effective machine is to force them to put aside differences through necessity. Hence he demands constant work from all hands through a storm; this theme will be repeated in Chapter 7. Reade's injury is obviously symbolic—the young man, once so platonically devoted to Clarissa, is injured by her open sexual availability. Oakes beats Clarissa and claims the facial marks are due to a fall during the storm; Maturin knows otherwise. The scene at Annamooka is friendly, and the information about Moahu that Aubrey receives is fairly comprehensive and informs the plot development of the remainder of the novel. Aubrey will support Puolani against the French-aligned Kalahua; he will seek to recapture Truelove, and he will seek to destroy Franklin. He will be successful in two of these strategies. Note particularly the humorous discussion between the medical men about the various proposed treatments for hydrophobia, or rabies. Obviously it was a painful death, especially when medically treated.



Chapters 6 and 7

Chapters 6 and 7 Summary

Aubrey and Maturin discuss the situation at Moahu. Franklin, obviously the focal point of French power, is captained by one Dutourd, a man with whom they are familiar. Dutourd is a type of Utopian Idealist and feels the ends justify the means. Maturin agrees that Aubrey must intervene on behalf of Puolani even if this makes Moahu a de facto British colony. Meanwhile, Surprise provisions and waters. Clarissa finds Annamooka captivating and watches everything going on with rapt attention. When numerous native pigs are brought aboard as provisions the Sarah and Emily are outraged that the butcher refuses to properly feed the hogs. After much minor political drama Aubrey transfers the care of these particular hogs to Jemmy Ducks. The next day Maturin and Clarissa go ashore to categorize local flora and fauna, though Maturin is rather diverted from his usual energetic pursuit of native lifeforms by Clarissa's apparent need for intimate discussion. The characters discuss Sarah and Emily and various other aspects of Surprise, and then Clarissa relates her life's story, using a curious monotone.

Clarissa is probably born c. 1787 in England; she becomes an orphan early in life and is sent to live with her guardian, a distant relative she refers to as Cousin Edward, and another young girl living at the same estate. As Clarissa matures, the much older Cousin Edward engages her in a series of "night games" or sexual play, leading eventually to repeated sexual intercourse. Later, Cousin Edward apparently suffers financial reverses and begins to allow at least one creditor to sexually molest the two young girls in his care. When Cousin Edward dies, Clarissa is put onto the street by the same creditor. Due to her education, Clarissa eventually secures a position at a whorehouse, known as Mother Abbot's, where she works keeping books. After several months, she begins to engage in sexual activity with various clients and in time becomes both a bookkeeper and a prostitute. During her work as a prostitute, Clarissa meets Wray and Ledward, two treasonous government officials who feature prominently in earlier volumes in the series of novels. At some point, and for undisclosed reasons, Clarissa murders a Mr. Caley c. 1809 and is sentenced to death, though her sentence is later commuted to transportation. Clarissa is thus sent to the penal colony near Port Jackson and stays there until 1813 when she meets William Oakes, who takes her aboard Surprise as a stowaway. Maturin is then excited to learn that Clarissa knows the identity of Wray and Ledward's high-ranking accomplice, a duke with a particular deformity in his leg. All then return to Surprise.

In Chapter 7 Maturin ruminates about the implication of the Duke, and he writes a lengthy coded letter to Sir Joseph Blaine. The letter-writing takes a long time and meanwhile a leave-taking celebration goes on ashore. Then Surprise departs, and Aubrey leaves what should be a routine evolution in the hands of Davidge. Davidge and West argue, though, and proceed to bungle the operation horribly; finally Pullings and then Aubrey sort it out. Aubrey is absolutely furious that his officers have become so professionally incompetent through personal issues and in discussing the situation with



Pullings suggests that Oakes should be made an acting lieutenant. Pullings demurs and gently suggests that this would cause an even deeper division among the crew. Aubrey finally understands what is going on in his ship and takes steps to correct the issue. Over the next several days Aubrey drives the crew with fierce determination and they become too exhausted to argue or complain. Reade returns to duty and Martin and Maturin are reconciled; Martin finally admits their slight estrangement has been due to his attempt to avoid Clarissa, for whom he shamefully has felt much lust. The chapter ends with Aubrey hosting a dinner for Maturin, Pullings, Oakes, and Clarissa.

Chapters 6 and 7 Analysis

Chapter 6 continues to provide character development for the major characters in general and for Clarissa in particular. Much of Aubrey and Maturin's discussion of Captain Dutourd relies on developments in previous novels, and the captain and his political leanings form the basis for some subsequent novel plot development; they are not significant in the current novel. The lengthy discussion between Maturin and Clarissa is the longest dialogue exchange in the novel by far and resembles more of a personal monograph than a conversation. Clarissa's attitudes about sexual activities, marriage, and men are fully explained; as supplementary material the discussion about Sarah and Emily leads nicely into Clarissa's life—had she secured as caring a guardian as Maturin, Clarissa would be more like Sarah and Emily than herself. Maturin's probing questions about Wray and Ledward are fairly unintelligible within the confines of the current novel, but readers of previous novels will realize a continuing development of a multi-novel plot element. The Duke involved has long escaped identification, though his situation is fully developed in future novels in the series. The recipient of Maturin's lengthy encoded letter, Sir Joseph Blaine, is barely a minor character in the current novel but in many of the novels of the series is a major character. The botched departure during Chapter 7 brings the simmering crew divisions to a very public head. What should prove to be a routine, simple operation turns into an embarrassment of errors. Aubrey responds in his official capacity by demanding reformed performance and so forth, really the only option available to him. The brief conversation between Aubrey and Pullings is enjoyable—Pullings informs Aubrey of the situation without actually saying anything derogatory about his fellow officers. Another segment of excellent dialogue in a novel full of excellent dialogue passes between Martin and Maturin. Their friendship has grown strangely strained because of Clarissa. While Maturin has controlled his lust, Martin has been unable to control his thoughts and finds it disagreeable and embarrassing. Hence, he has simply estranged himself quite deliberately from Clarissa in order to avoid contact with her, which would in turn arouse his passions.



Chapters 8 and 9

Chapters 8 and 9 Summary

Surprise sails for Moahu and Aubrey orders punishment, including a rare bout of flogging for those most insubordinate. As the journey continues Aubrey drives the crew very hard, demanding constant and excellent performance from them. While this goes on Maturin and Clarissa continue their evening conversations, and Maturin sounds her out on her thoughts of the future and offers some basic advice about male jealousies and passions; Clarissa finds the information interesting and useful. Maturin also talks with Martin at some length, offering his humorous version of the use of the sea. As the journey continues Maturin and Aubrey write letters home summarizing their feelings about recent experiences. Aubrey and Maturin confer about their plans for intervening at Moahu, and Aubrey fully develops his plans. As part of exercising the crew, the great guns are fired at targets and Clarissa finds the display exceptionally invigorating. As Moahu approaches Aubrey gathers the crew and tells them of his plans.

In Chapter 9 Surprise is disguised as a whaler and stands into Pabay harbor. Truelove sends a boat and as the Frenchmen board, they are captured. The rowers prove to be imprisoned British sailors and they apprise Aubrey of the tactical and strategic situations ashore. The French hold Truelove and have just sent one cannon overland with Kalahua and his military force. Acting on Aubrey's rapid instructions Davidge leads men ashore and quickly cut off the French soldiers who give up Truelove to try to warn their inland compatriots. Davidge's performance truly is exceptional, but he is killed during the encounter. In short order Surprise takes Truelove as a prize and the two ships then set tail for the southern end of the island. During the brief voyage Maturin asks Clarissa if she would like to return to England. She is confused and wonders how it would be possible but admits she would like it very much. Maturin assures her that she will be welcomed, inferring her testimony about the Duke will be highly valuable. Their conversation continues for some time, until Surprise arrives. Aubrey confers with Puloani and finds her a beautiful woman. They make an alliance of good faith and necessity and then develop plans for ambushing Kalahua's forces.

Aubrey sends up several carronades from Surprise, which are placed in an ambush site in a steep ravine. Maturin sets up an aid station behind the lines, but it is not needed as the actual battle is short and murderous; Puloani's forces make sure no captives are taken. Aubrey's plans have been executed to perfection and Kalahua and the French forces have been destroyed to a man. During the battle Franklin is seen offshore, but the privateer does not close with Surprise, temporarily under the command of Oakes while Aubrey is ashore directing the land encounter. Puloani throws a huge celebratory victory feast. Aubrey watches the erotic hula dancing girls with much interest and then dons a red feather robe as a sign of his greatness. Later that evening a drunk Aubrey is joined by a willing native girl. On the following day Aubrey appoints Oakes acting lieutenant and places him in command of Truelove. Clarissa accompanies her husband



as Truelove sails for the nearest prize court location, and Surprise stands to sea chasing Franklin.

Chapters 8 and 9 Analysis

Chapter 8 makes the transition from the establishment of the situation at Moahu to the resolution of the conflict. Most of the chapter is devoted to conversations between the primary characters: Aubrey and Maturin; Maturin and Clarissa; Maturin and Martin; and Aubrey and Pullings. Maturin and Aubrey have already come to a decision regarding Oakes and Clarissa. Oakes' dedicated performance of his duty during a very difficult situation has earned Aubrey's sincere respect, and Clarissa's value to British intelligence is great. The couple is therefore sent away at the novel's conclusion aboard Truelove, the ironically-named fur-trader. Note the novel was originally titled CLARISSA OAKES; the American editions are titled TRUELOVE; in fact, the ship Truelove plays little significant role in the plot.

The novel is atypical of the series of novels inasmuch as it does not contain a naval combat sequence of any kind. Instead, the only military adventure in the novel is Davidge's brief melee and Aubrey's later ambush. The first encounter is related only as it is watched from a distance, and the second is related only after the fact as Aubrey tells Maturin about the action. Thus, military conflict is not overtly present in the narrative. Instead, the conflict focuses on interpersonal relationships and crew divisions. This proves to change in the next novel, however, as Surprise goes off hunting Franklin. The Chapter 9 resolution of sending Oakes and Clarissa away aboard Truelove is a fitting resolution, but Maturin's exceptional intervention is not credible within the confines of the current novel; instead, the identity of the Duke, and Clarissa's witness of it, is the dominating cause of Maturin's intervention. The rationale for this is developed fully only in preceding and subsequent novels in the series, in which Clarissa is often a character. Note the blatant symbol of Aubrey's red feather cloak signaling impending infidelity—it finally links Aubrey to Clarissa in behavior in an enjoyable and humorous way.



Characters

Clarissa Oakes nee Harville

Clarissa Oakes is the titular character of the novel, which was originally published under title of CLARISSA OAKES and reprinted in the United States as THE TRUELOVE. By any standard, Clarissa is the dominant character in the novel, eclipsing even the series protagonists Aubrey and Maturin. Clarissa's lengthy history is recounted at considerable length throughout the novel, though it is chiefly presented in a series of monologues Clarissa delivers to Maturin during moments of relative solitude; most of the information is presented in the latter half of the novel.

Clarissa is probably born c. 1787 in England; she becomes an orphan early in life and is sent to live with her guardian, a distant relative she refers to as Cousin Edward. Another young girl is living at the same estate. As Clarissa matures, the much older Cousin Edward engages her in a series of "night games" or sexual play, leading eventually to repeated sexual intercourse. Later, Cousin Edward apparently suffers financial reverses and begins to allow at least one creditor to sexually molest the two young girls in his care. When Cousin Edward dies, Clarissa is put onto the street. Due to her education, Clarissa eventually secures a position at a whorehouse where she works keeping books. After several months, she begins to engage in sexual activity with various clients and in time becomes both a bookkeeper and a prostitute. During her work as a prostitute, Clarissa meets Wray and Ledward, two treasonous government officials who feature prominently in earlier volumes in the series of novels. At some point, and for undisclosed reasons, Clarissa murders one Mr. Caley c. 1809 and is sentenced to death, though her sentence is later commuted to transportation. Clarissa is thus sent to the penal colony near Port Jackson and stays there until 1813 when she meets William Oakes. Oakes takes Clarissa aboard Surprise as a stowaway and later in the voyage the two are married. Clarissa spends the next several months aboard Surprise.

Clarissa is intelligent and insightful, though she knows little about men, having been raised only in the company of perverse men as a wholly sexualized object. She views sexual intercourse as meaningless and without pleasure, but over the course of her time in Surprise she engages in various sexual activities with numerous crew members. Aubrey and Maturin both describe her as slim and possessed of average looks though after several months at sea they both yearn for her. Even the reserved Martin comes to find Clarissa sexually appealing. Clarissa dislikes talking about her past, resents all questions, expresses a strong dislike for children, and behaves in a generally proper way during social situations. She appears throughout the novel and her characterization is the primary narrative focus of the book. Note that her entire biography is self-supplied and thus open to speculation, though she appears trustworthy enough in the telling.



Captain Jack Aubrey

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

Aubrey wears his blonde hair in a long queue and dresses as a traditional ship's captain. Aubrey is athletic, possessed of exceptional 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. Aubrey is handsome and fairly useful, though his good-looks are marred by a variety of scars and combat-related wounds including an ear sliced apart in an old encounter and various scars on his head. Maturin comments to Clarissa Oakes that most of Aubrey's scars are, honorably, on the front half of his body (i.e., he has not run away as a coward during combat). Aubrey is usually somewhat less useful on land though on military occasions he proves useful enough.

As described in previous novels of the series, Aubrey has been once tossed out of the navy upon conviction of certain financial crimes that he did not commit. His resounding successes in *Surprise*, as a private man-of-war, have earned his reinstatement to the Royal Navy. During the current novel Aubrey reflects that his next command will likely be a much larger ship. Aubrey's financial status has varied widely during his career but at the moment he is very well off—indeed, rich. During the novel, Aubrey speculates much about the isolation of command and often burns with sexual desire for Clarissa Oakes.

Stephen Maturin

Maturin is one of two principle protagonists of the novel and shares the narrative focus with his close 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 repute. He is an unchallenged and undoubted master in his element of medicine and science, and his medical opinions are often surprisingly modern and nearly always correct. Although possessed of great 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. This aspect is not overly developed in the current novel except that Maturin learns by happenstance of a highly-placed pro-Napoleon duke.

Maturin is a small, squat man who in many respects is the antithesis of Aubrey. Maturin is much given to introspection, subtle interpretations, and analysis of the current situation. He is nearly entirely mental, with little interest in physical activities—though capable enough if needed. 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. This aspect of Maturin is much-developed in the current novel as he focuses his attention on Clarissa Oakes. Like Aubrey, Maturin derives great pleasure from music and is a capable musician.

Tom Pullings

Pullings has served under Aubrey as a lieutenant during previous novels in the series. He eventually gained promotion to captain, largely through Aubrey's efforts. He is an enthusiastic and optimistic captain, a devoted supporter of Jack Aubrey, and an extremely capable navigator, seaman, and officer. During the novel, Pullings lacks an appointment and is thus receiving only half-pay, though his time is entirely his own. Because he has no political influence, he has little prospect for an appointment. Pullings has enlisted as the first mate aboard Aubrey's private man-of-war Surprise. Pullings' entire reliability allows Aubrey much discretion in handling the ship and is a constant comfort to both Aubrey and Maturin. During the current novel Maturin comments on a livid, frightful, and disfiguring scar that runs across Pulling's entire face. Pullings is always dependable and is always a memorable minor character.

Reverend Nathaniel Martin

Nathaniel Martin is a man of the cloth and devoted to religion, though seamen are notoriously unsympathetic to a parson aboard their ship for superstitious reasons. Thus, Maturin engages Martin's assistance as an assistant surgeon and not as a preacher. Martin's situation ashore is financially uncertain and some of the earlier portions of the novel deal with Aubrey's offer of a position to Martin. Throughout the novel, Martin serves with reliable distinction even though he is very unhandy with nautical things and phrases. Martin is very educated, speaks several languages, and knows volumes about religion. He is naturally inquisitive and, like Maturin, a competent naturalist, artist, and musician. Within the narrative, Martin functions primarily as a student of Maturin, and some of the more risible sections of the novel deal with Maturin's nautical instruction to Martin. Martin finds Clarissa Oakes incredibly attractive and admits to Maturin feelings of nearly overwhelming desire for her—feelings which lead him to deliberately avoid her company on several occasions.

Padeen Coleman

Padeen is Maturin's servant, or steward, and is responsible for keeping Maturin's clothing and cabin in good order. He also acts as the ship's loblolly boy, or a type of unskilled medical assistant. He is described as large and physically powerful. He speaks only halting English and is usually very quiet and reserved. Maturin finds him trustworthy and competent, and is drawn to him because of their shared heritage and similar viewpoints; in particular, Maturin values Padeen's quiet nature.



Preserved Killick and Barrett Bonden

Preserved Killick is Jack Aubrey's steward and has been a faithful servant for many years and on many occasions. 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. 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 is Aubrey's coxswain. He is the most dependable character in Aubrey's crew. For example, Aubrey demonstrates his complete trust in Bonden by selecting him to determine that a landing on Norfolk island is not possible, when clearly one is actually possible. Needless to say, the reliable Bonden always demonstrates complete tact, honesty, and devotion.

Davidge and West

Davidge is the second mate aboard *Surprise* and has been with the crew for a considerable time. Aubrey finds him competent but not exceptional; Davidge has been ejected from the Royal Navy for various professional deficiencies. West is the third mate aboard *Surprise* and has been with the crew as long as Davidge. Aubrey finds West competent but unexceptional and unimaginative. West, like Davidge, has been ejected from the Royal Navy. Davidge and West have been minor enemies for quite some time until their natural enmity becomes obvious and pronounced due to their mutual sexual desire for Clarissa Oakes. On one occasion Davidge receives a forceful blow from West which leaves him with a facial bruise. After the men's disagreement boils over into the public arena, Aubrey calls them to terms and demands reconciliation. Toward the end of the novel Davidge leads a dangerous and successful attack on retreating French forces, personally heading the charge, but is killed for his efforts.

Jemmy Ducks and Sarah and Emily Sweeting

The *Surprise's* crewman who cares for the poultry is known by his job-title, "Jemmy Ducks"; his actual name is not offered in the novel. Jemmy Ducks is a kindly and efficient sailor who throughout the narrative appears always earnestly trying to do his best. When the *Surprise* takes on board numerous hogs at Annamooka, the butcher proves unable to convince the hogs to eat and hence their care is transferred to Jemmy Ducks. Sarah and Emily Sweeting are two Melanesian girls who are taken from their home town as the sole survivors of a plague; they act as ship's boys, for the most part. Although female and frequently naked, their young age prevents them from being seen as sexual objects, unlike Clarissa Oakes. Jemmy Ducks and Sarah and Emily Sweeting are all minor but recurring characters throughout several novels in the series.



Midshipman William Oakes

Midshipman Oakes is a competent and dedicated sailor who smuggles a woman aboard during Surprise's stopover at Port Jackson. The woman, Clarissa Harvill, was previously a prisoner transported to the penal colonies in Australia. Oakes is described as strong, intelligent, but fairly typical in most respects. At one point, Maturin briefly comments at upon Oakes' imperfect complexion. Aubrey frequently comments upon Oakes' dedication to duty, despite bringing a woman aboard, and suggests Oakes for promotion to acting lieutenant; the move is prevented by wardroom politics. Pullings finds Oakes' performance as a midshipman exemplary and the men of Oakes' watch fully support him. After Oakes marries Clarissa he becomes entangled in the jealousies and extra-marital sexual affairs she conducts. At one time Oakes beats Clarissa and at another perhaps beats Davidge. At the end of the novel, Aubrey remedies the complex situation by appointing Oakes as acting commander of the Truelove, a recent prize.



Objects/Places

Surprise

Surprise is a private man-of-war, owned and captained by Jack Aubrey, and hired by the Royal Navy to prosecute official business as a hired vessel. She was French-built and has previously been known as L'Unité, Retaliation, and Retribution. Her figure-head is a gilded woman with an ample bosom and a surprised look on her face. She displaces about six hundred tons, has a crew of about two hundred men, and carries a main armament of twelve-pounder long guns. She also carries thirty-two pounder carronades as ballast; the main guns can be switched around with a few days' work.

HMS Éclair

HMS Éclair is a fast cutter that appears in the vicinity of Norfolk Island and thereafter gives chase to Surprise. Aubrey fears Éclair means to search Surprise for stowaways—there are two, namely Padeen and Clarissa—and thus Aubrey attempts to avoid the cutter. In fact, the cutter is delivering mail and new orders. However, before this is established, Oakes and Clarissa are married to prevent the cutter from taking her back to Australia.

Annamooka

Annamooka is a fictional island several days' sailing from the Sandwich Island group. Surprise calls upon Annamooka during its voyage and finds the island natives friendly and supportive. While Aubrey oversees provisioning efforts Maturin and Clarissa go ashore botanizing. During their day ashore Clarissa opens up to Maturin about her troubled past; Maturin collects several beetles and birds. Aubrey purchases several dozen Annamooka hogs that will only eat taro, a memorable scene that causes a minor riot aboard Surprise. Annamooka appears during Chapters 6 and 7.

Moahu

Moahu is a fictional island near the Sandwich Island group. Aubrey proceeds to Moahu to drive out the French and forge an alliance with the local populace and England. The island is described as roughly hourglass in shape, with a belt of mountains across the middle dividing the northern pro-French region from the southern pro-English region. Aubrey reinforces the southern tribe and successfully completes his mission.



Marline-Spike

A marline-spike, or more-commonly a marlinspike, is a tool used in ropework for splicing and unlaying rope. It is basically a polished tapered cone or needle, about a foot in length. They are usually made from steel. During the novel, midshipman Reade falls and lands on his own marline-spike which drives into his abdomen, nearly crushing a nerve and breaking bone fragments away. Maturin operates on the wound and saves Reade's life. During the lengthy convalescence, Reade confesses to Maturin that Clarissa receives various officers and sailors into her cabin while her husband Oakes is on duty; Reade was, at one time, particularly devoted to Clarissa but is disgusted by her habits.

Truelove

The Truelove is a Nootka fur-trading vessel captured by the French and then recaptured by Surprise. The ship gives its name to the edition of the novel published in the United States; originally the novel was titled CLARISSA OAKES. The Surprise's recapture of Truelove makes the vessel a legal prize, and its cargo is worth a considerable amount of money, once again supporting Aubrey's nickname of Lucky Jack. The Truelove first appears on p. 137 and is described primarily during Chapter 5. At the end of the novel Oakes is appointed commander of Truelove.

Franklin

Franklin is a privateer bearing twenty-two nine-pounder guns. She is captained by Jean Dutourd, who has appeared in previous novels in the series. Crewed by Frenchmen, Franklin flies an American flag. Although a powerful ship for the region, Franklin is not the equal of Surprise. Franklin captures Truelove and a few other ships and is Aubrey's primary—though hypothetical—enemy in the area. In the novel, Franklin appears only briefly and does not engage Surprise in combat.

Carronades

A carronade was a short smoothbore cannon used by the British Navy until about 1860. They were designed as short-range cannons. Light-weight and devoid of many of the features of long guns, carronades were devastating at short ranges but notoriously inaccurate beyond pistol-shot ranges. A carronade weighed approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ as much as a long gun throwing an equal weight of metal. Aubrey uses carronades to meet the overland attack on Moahu.



Transportation

Transportation is the deporting of convicted criminals to a penal colony. During 1788 to 1868, England transported convicted criminals to various penal colonies in Australia for major and petty crimes. For example, Clarissa Harvill is transported for murder. Aubrey and Maturin are familiar with transportation and in earlier novels have both expressed a disgust for the practice.

The Scarlet Dress

When Clarissa and Oakes are to be married, Aubrey provides a bolt of silk—ironically scarlet silk—from which Clarissa's wedding dress is manufactured. The scarlet material is a humorous statement about her unknown past as a murderess and prostitute. Later in the novel Aubrey dons a cape made of red feathers, which makes him visually equivalent to Clarissa in her wedding dress and, as expected, within a few hours Aubrey is sleeping with an unknown woman.



Themes

Jealousy

One of the fundamental themes of the novel is that of jealousy. Clarissa comes aboard the closed all-male society of Surprise and lives there for several months. She proves amenable to sexual intercourse or activity with nearly any suitor and after a few weeks is not only sleeping with her new husband, Midshipman Oakes, but also with two of his superiors, Davidge and West, as well as apparently other sailors. Aside from this she proves socially open and engaging and even as Aubrey, Maturin, and Martin come to know her they all secretly come to burn with desire for her. Needless to say this situation cannot long continue without complication, and the resultant jealousy and conflict forms the dominant narrative arc in the novel. Jealousy is exhibited in several ways. First, Maturin begins to dominate Clarissa's time in conversation while she is on the ship's deck; many other crewmembers become jealous of the time Maturin spends in her company because it excludes them from doing the same. Other crewmembers, such as Midshipman Reade, initially find Clarissa appealing and dote upon her but as her sexual availability becomes widely known they begin to regard her as a problem. Within a few weeks the ship's crew has become divided into various factions that support Clarissa, detract from Clarissa, or argue for influence with her. This manifests in several ways; for example, Oakes beats her for infidelity; Reade spies on her sexual activities, and West and Davidge engage in an all-but open battle for access to her. This conflict results in Davidge receiving a brutal blow across the face, apparently from West. The mounting jealousy threatens to ruin Surprise's fighting qualities; this theme of sexual jealousy runs throughout the novel.

Morality

Clarissa is a character with what most would consider an abnormal, perhaps perverted, morality. She confides in Maturin a lengthy history of sexual abuse and incest as a child followed by forced prostitution as a child and, later, by voluntary prostitution as a young woman. She notes that while most girls were only beginning to explore sexuality, she was familiar with all of its aspects. She finds sexual intercourse and sexual activity uninteresting, finds no pleasure in them, but does not particularly mind them. On one occasion she remarks to Maturin that the bad thing about being forcibly raped was simply the possible exposure to disease and the possibility of pregnancy. On several occasions Maturin marvels at Clarissa's entire lack of modesty and her uninterested examination of Aubrey's naked body from a position of advantage. Indeed, Maturin's consideration of Clarissa's morality forms one of the best-developed themes of the novel. The theme of morality is supported by various other characters' views. Reade comes to loathe Clarissa's behavior; the ignorant Aubrey finds her proper and alluring, and Martin reviles himself for desiring her and takes concrete steps to alienate her so he will not succumb to his desire. Meanwhile Oakes beats her for infidelity and West and Davidge fight for access to her sexual availability. Within the hothouse of an



isolated man-of-war at sea, the issue of the morality of the sole woman aboard becomes a dominant theme of the novel.

Trouble in Paradise

For many months Aubrey has worked to forge the crew of *Surprise* into an efficient and capable machine of war. When *Surprise* leaves Port Jackson at the beginning of the novel, the crew is unified in purpose and attitude and efficient in sailing and gunnery. From Aubrey's perspective, the ship is supplied, crewed, and operated nearly to perfection. Indeed, during his first inspection trip he finds all as expected. Yet something is amiss. He notes with alarm the crew's growing garrulousness and frivolity and then discovers Clarissa, a stowaway young woman. Aubrey's initial desire is to maroon her and her lover on lonely and desolate Norfolk Island, but he reconsiders and determines to set them ashore in the first British port he visits. Perhaps Norfolk Island would have been better for all involved because Aubrey's paradise rapidly decays into a crew divided by jealousy and factions. This results because of Clarissa's sexual availability and the resultant feelings of intense sexual jealousy among the crew. By the time *Surprise* leaves Annamooka two of the officers, West and Davidge, are so full of hatred toward one another—they are both having sex with Clarissa—that they can scarcely hoist the anchor and get the ship underway. Aubrey is so infuriated by this division that he spends the next few weeks working the crew relentlessly until some semblance of order is restored. By the end of the novel Aubrey has somewhat succeeded in restoring unity through the simple expediency of working the crew so hard they are too tired to fight amongst themselves. But the real issue is only resolved when Davidge is killed in action, and, later, when Clarissa and Oakes are sent aboard another ship. The theme of the breakdown of discipline due to a perturbation in the routine is a dominant and obvious theme of the novel.

Style

Point of View

The novel is told from the third-person, limited, point of view. The narrator is reliable, entirely effaced, and unnamed. Clarissa Oakes, Jack Aubrey, and Stephen Maturin, the main characters, are the protagonists and central figures in all the scenes in the novel. The narrator divulges some internal thoughts of the protagonists but not of other characters. The majority of the story is told through action and dialogue; revealed thoughts are infrequent and are used for characterization rather than plot development. Occasional personal letters allow for some first-person introspection without destroying the cadence of the overall narrative structure; these letters are from Aubrey to his wife Sophie or from Maturin to his wife Diana.

The third-person point of view allows the protagonists to be presented in a highly-sympathetic manner. For example, the narrative structure portrays Clarissa's amorality as explicable and even expected rather than perverse or immoral. 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 all three protagonists 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; it is accessible and successful.

Setting

The novel features two primary types of settings. The first and most significant is aboard *Surprise*, a British private man-of-war, hired into Royal service. The ship is owned and captained by Aubrey, officered by Pullings and others, and crewed by a highly proficient but rag-tag assortment of seamen. 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 hardships endured. The typical at-sea setting of *Surprise* is perturbed by the prolonged appearance of a young woman, Clarissa, a disturbance that forms the basis of the narrative structure.

The second setting presented in the novel is diffuse and consists of various ports, cities, and islands. Included among these settings are Port Jackson, Norfolk Island, the fictional Annamooka, and the fictional Moahu. In general, these settings are transient, poorly described, and thought of—at least by Aubrey—as locations to fight, refit, or re-supply. For example, Annamooka and Moahu are little more than tropical islands while Norfolk Island is viewed as forbidding. While the action aboard ship is dominated by Aubrey, the action ashore is usually dominated by Maturin. This division of the narrative



by locale allows each man to figure prominently within his best environment. Throughout all elements, Clarissa's presence is felt.

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. Some of the places, many 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 British 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. For example, most of the opening pages deal with difficulties between Aubrey and Maturin—difficulties fully described in a previous novel.

Structure

The 256-page novel is divided into nine enumerated 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. Additionally, Clarissa speaks about her distant past in much detail during several conversations with Maturin. 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 fifteenth 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. 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 in the period of time used as the novel's setting; namely, the war between England and France during the year c. 1813. Thus, the novel's language, technology, politics, and geography are all based upon historically accurate representations. Note that many of the novels are set in c. 1813 such that the narrative time would consume several years—a problem acknowledged by the author.



Quotes

"Standing at the frigate's taffrail, and indeed leaning upon it, Jack Aubrey considered her wake, stretching away neither very far nor emphatically over the smooth pure green-blue sea: a creditable furrow, however, in these light airs. She had just come about, with her larboard tacks aboard, and as he expected her wake showed that curious nick where, when the sheets were hauled aft, tallied and belayed, she made a little wanton gripe whatever the helmsman might do.

He knew the Surprise better than any other ship he had served in: he had been laid across a gun in the cabin just below him and beaten for misconduct when he was a midshipman, and as her captain he too had used brute force to teach refers the difference between naval right and naval wrong. He had served in her for many years, and he loved her even more than his first command: it was not so much as a man-of-war, a fighting-machine, that he loved her, for even when he first set foot aboard so long ago neither her size nor her force had been in any way remarkable, and now that the war had been going on for twenty years and more, now that the usual frigate carried thirty-eight or thirty-six eighteen-pounders and gauged a thousand tons the Surprise, with her twenty-eight nine-pounders and her less than six hundred tons, had been left far behind; in fact she and the rest of her class had been sold out of the service or broken up and not one remained in commission, although both French and American yards were building fast, shockingly fast: no, it was primarily as a ship that he loved her, a fast, eminently responsive ship that, well handled, could outsail any square-rigged vessel he had ever seen, above all on a bowline." (p. 7)

"This was not the only time he had been manipulated, either. Throughout the voyage from Batavia to Sydney Jack Aubrey had been chaste: necessarily so, given the absence of anyone to be unchaste with. And throughout his anxious, frustrating negotiations in Sydney he had been chaste, because of total exhaustion by the end of the day. But after Governor Macquarie's return all this changed. At several official and unofficial gatherings he met Selina Wesley, a fine plump young woman with a prominent bosom, an indifferent reputation and a roving eye. Twice they were neighbors at dinner, twice at supper-parties; she had naval connexions, an extensive knowledge of the world, and a very free way of speaking; they got along famously. She had no patience with Romish monks or nuns, she said; celibacy was great nonsense—quite unnatural; and when during the interval in an evening concert given in some gardens outside Sydney she asked him to walk with her down to the tree-fern dell he found himself in such a boyish state of desire that his voice was scarcely at his command." (p. 12)

"Like most medical men Stephen Maturin had seen the effects of addiction, full-blown serious addiction, to alcohol and opium; and like many medical men he knew from inner experience just how immensely powerful that craving was, and how supernaturally cunning and casuistical the deprived victim might become. It was therefore only with the greatest reluctance that he had included one small square case-bottle of laudanum (the alcoholic tincture of opium, alas) in his medicine chest. Once laudanum had come aboard by the carboy, and indulgence in it under stress had very nearly wrecked his



own life and Padeen's; now, although he was reasonably sure of himself he had not the same confidence in Padeen, and this single bottle, often disguised and sometimes filled with an emetic, was kept in an iron box, far from the ordinary drugs.' (p. 35)

"Heavens sir, that was a famous victory,' cried Mrs Oakes, clasping her hands. 'So it was, ma'am,' said Jack. 'Allow me to carve you a little of this soused hog's face. Mr Martin, the bottle stands by you, sir. But in a way your running fight, tearing down the Channel for example in a heavy sea with all possible sail aboard, a lee-shore within pistol-shot, both sides evenly matched and both blazing away like Guy Fawkes' night is even finer. Mr Davidge, could you tell about the Amethyst and the Thetis in the year eight, do you think? Lord, that was such an action!' 'Pray do, Mr Davidge,' said Mrs Oakes. 'Nothing could please me more.' 'A glass of wine with you, Mr Davidge, while you collect your mind,' said Jack, at the same time filling Mrs Oakes's. 'Well, ma'am,' said Davidge, wiping his mouth, 'in the autumn of that year we were close in with the coast of Brittany, the wind at east-north-east, a topgallant breeze, when late in the evening we saw a ship—a heavy frigate she proved to be—slip out of Lorient, steering west by south. We instantly wore in chase...' (pp. 63-64)

"Stephen wandered aft to where the Captain was taking his ease in the great cabin, stretched out on the stern-window locker with one foot in a basin of water. 'Do you suffer, brother?' he asked, 'or is this part of the Navy's superstitious horror of the unclean?' 'I suffer, Stephen,' said Jack, 'but moderately. Do you remember how I stood on the dumb-chalder when Dick Richards and I cleared the Nutmeg's rudder?' 'The dumb-chalder. Sure I think of it constantly: it is rarely from my mind.' 'Well, it gave me a shrewd knock, and I limped for weeks. And just now I caught my ankle against the lynch-pin there, hitting it in just the same place. How I roared.' 'I am sure you did. Will I look at it, now?' Stephen took the foot in his hands, considered it, pressed it, heard the catch of breath, and said 'It is a little small piece of the external malleolus, trying to come out.' 'What is the external malleolus?' 'Nay, if you can oppress me with your dumb-chalders, I can do the same with my malleoli. Hold still. Should you like me to take I out now? I have a lancet over there, among the seaweed.'" (p. 99)

"Martin edged his way round and with a decently restrained triumph he said 'Do not beat me, Maturin, but I have seen your bird.' 'Oh,' cried Stephen, 'have you indeed? And I wearing out the day watching. Are you sure?' 'There can be no doubt, I am afraid. Yellow, blue-tipped bill, a strong dark eyebrow, a confiding expression, and black feet. He was within ten yards of me.' 'Well, who ever said the world was fair? But I am sorry to hear that you fell out of the top.' 'That was a base slander. In my hurry to come down and tell you my foot made a trifling



slip and I hung for a moment or two by my hands, perfectly safe, perfectly in control, and if the well-meaning John Brampton had not heaved me up by main force I should have regained the platform with ease. In any event I came down entirely unaided.' Stephen sniffed and said 'Please to describe the bird.'" (p. 101)

"Stephen's little girls, Sarah and Emily, were extraordinarily useful at a time like this. They were not in the least offended or surprised by the more squalid aspects of a sick-berth; they had been brought up to dissecting and to keeping Jemmy Ducks' quarters clean; and neither in their remote Melanesian island nor aboard the Surprise had they had a pampered nursery life. Now they carried, fetched, kept the sick men company, comforted, and gave them more informed news of the outside world than could be drawn from the medicos. To the foremast jacks they talked fore-castle English, seaman's English, with a broad West Country burr—'Skipper auled down the main topmast staysail at one bell. 'But,' saye e, 'we'm going to ave another atful of wind more easterly soon; so do ee stow it in the fore catharpings, and pass a gurt old gasket round'—and quarterdeck English to Stephen and Martin. 'Sir, Jemmy Ducks says he is going to ask Old Chucks—' 'Now, Sarey, where's your manner?' asked William Lamb, quarter-gunner, in an aside. 'Beg pardon,' said Sarah. '...is going to ask Mr Bulkeley the bosun to suggest to the Captain that hatches might be battened down: we are all aswim forward, and he is afraid for the sitting hen.'" (p. 121)

"[']...Killick, what are you doing to that young woman?' he called through the open stern window.

'Nothing, sir,' said Killick instantly, and after a gasping pause, 'It is quite all right—perfectly natural. I was just saying good night. Which she pulled me across, the liberty-boat having gone too soon.'

'Killick, come aboard at once,' said Jack.

'Which the boarding-netting is rigged, sir. I thought to creep up by the quarter-galley, but you ain't turned in yet,' said Killick in a tremulous voice; though he did extract some hint of grievance and hard usage from their sitting up so late.

'Come in by the sash-light,' said Jack.

The sash-light could be reached by a spring from the canoe: Killick, though totty from his swink, attempted it, fell back into the sea, sending up a phosphorescent splash like a moderately good firework, tried again and this time grasped the sill. But he hung there gasping, and it was not until the young woman, with a shriek of laughter, had shoved him from behind, that he came inboard, sodden, resentful, and sadly out of countenance, going straight through the door with a bowed head, a mumble and a gesture towards his forelock.

They sat back, each secretly pleased with having acquired a moral advantage over Killick at last...[.]" (p. 147)

"'Yes, sir,' said Pullings; and then barely audible in his embarrassment and protesting that he did not mean to carry tales or inform on anyone, he said 'But that would mean Mrs Oakes messing with us.'

'Of course. That is a part of my argument.'



'Well sir...some of the officers are sweet on Mrs Oakes.'
'I dare say they are—a very amiable young woman.'
'No sir. I mean serious—bloody serious—cut-your-throat serious—fucking serious...'
'Oh.' Jack Aubrey was taken aback entirely. 'But you surely do not mean that last word literally?'
'No, sir. It is just my coarse way of speaking: I beg pardon. But so serious that if she were there at the table day after day...' (pp. 180-181)

"Mrs Oakes and Stephen looked up. 'There is punishment carrying out forward,' he said. 'Some of the people behaved amiss in pulling up the anchor.'
'So Oakes told me,' she replied, listening to the successive shrieks with no apparent emotion. 'How many does the Captain usually give?'
'I have never known him give more than a dozen, and rarely so many. Flogging is uncommon in ships under his command.'
'A dozen? Lord, that would make them stare in New South Wales. There was a horrible parson, a magistrate, who only dealt in hundreds. Dr Redfern hated him.'
'I know it, my dear. So did I. Breathe deep, will you now, and hold it. Very well. That will do,' he said at last. 'You may put your clothes on again.'" (p. 198)

"An old tired shabby whaler, with a crow's nest aloft, trying-out gear and general filth on deck and deeply squalid sides stood into Pabay, the north-eastern port of Moahu, in Kalahua's territory, just making headway against the ebb under a single blue-patched foretopsail.
In her crow's nest stood her even shabbier master in a blackguardly round hat, crammed up against his unshaven mate, both of them gauging the wind and the distance between the two headlands on either side of the entrance. 'We should get out in two tacks at slack water or on the ebb,' said Jack, and they returned to their examination of the far end, where the wide, sheltered bay drew in before broadening into the harbor itself.
'We shall open the narrows any minute now, sir,' said Pullings." (p. 223)

Topics for Discussion

Originally the novel was titled CLARISSA OAKES; the subsequent United States publication was titled THE TRUELOVE. How does the change in title alter the experience of reading the book? Which title is more appropriate and why?

When Aubrey and Pullings first discover Clarissa as a stowaway, Aubrey appears undisturbed and continues his inspection as if nothing untoward had occurred. How do you explain Aubrey's reaction?

When Surprise approaches Norfolk Island Aubrey sends Bonden ashore to ascertain whether a landing is possible. Maturin hypothesizes an unspoken understanding passes between Aubrey and Bonden prior to Bonden's departure. Do you think Bonden understood Aubrey's desire to retain Oakes and Clarissa aboard Surprise?

During the lengthy voyage Martin comes to burn with desire for Clarissa and, knowing that she would accommodate him, deliberately distances himself from her. On the other hand, both West and Davidge engage in sexual intercourse with Clarissa. Is one response to the situation is more appropriate than the other? Discuss.

Symbols play an important role in fiction. For example, Clarissa's scarlet wedding dress symbolizes her status as a prostitute just as surely as Aubrey's red feather cloak indicates an impending extramarital sexual encounter. Do you find it symbolic that midshipman Reade is pierced by a marline-spike just as his esteem for Clarissa falters? Discuss.

Nearly every novel in the series features one or more maritime combat encounters between ships. The current novel features only a few minor combat scenes that transpire ashore: one is viewed through a telescope and another is experienced only through an after-action recounting. Does this singular deviation from formula seriously influence the novel's narrative development? Does it hamper the novel's popular appeal? Discuss.

Aubrey finds Davidge's and West's performance as mates deplorable and Pullings wholeheartedly agrees. Yet when Aubrey suggests that the reliable Oakes should be promoted to acting mate, Pullings strongly disagrees, even though he freely admits Oakes' ability is commensurate with the position. What is Pullings' overriding concern about Oakes position within the ship (review pp. 180-181)? Is Pullings' concern justified?