

BEYOND CONSUMMATE MASCULINITY: IMPLICATIONS OF DIFFERING
MASCULINITIES IN PATRICK O'BRIAN'S NOVELS

by

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ABSTRACT

There has been a lot written about gender studies in the nineteenth century and there have been comparisons between Patrick O'Brian's writing and Jane Austen's. I look at masculinity and how O'Brian may be demonstrating something interesting about the similarities and the differences between a nineteenth century masculinity a more modern concept of masculinity through the fictional characters in his Master and Commander Series. In order to evaluate his representation of the nineteenth century man I look at representations from the period by authors including Frederick Marryat and Jane Austen. The connection between Jane Austen and Patrick O'Brian is clearly outlined by many theorists as O'Brian was an ardent fan of Austen and, arguably, emulated her works. Marryat and Austen serve as a control group to give accurate representations of concepts of masculinity from the early nineteenth century against which to place O'Brian's characters and make some interesting comments about the comparison.

More than simply comparing period authors to a modern author writing about the period, I focus on the difference between the two primary characters in O'Brian's novels. I argue that Jack Aubrey demonstrates a Consummate Masculinity of the early nineteenth century while Stephen Maturin, though not conforming to the type of masculinity demonstrated by Jack, is still masculine. From Stephen's difference we can see ways in which O'Brian reveals how masculinity has moved beyond the possibility of a Consummate Masculinity to a broader, more modern, concept of what it means to be a man.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: SNAPSHOT OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The period of the Napoleonic wars in England was a turbulent one. The king struggled with madness, the Navy, though powerful, was ageing in a war which depended on older ships to fend off the generally better built French vessels and prevent an invasion, and the Army and militia seemed more interested in debauchery and self promotion than in the good of the nation. It is a period that has been represented by great literature both from the period and by authors writing at later times. It is a point at which it was clear what it meant to be a man, to be masculine, especially for those men involved in the military. Naval heroes received adulation in the newspapers and middle class men were able to rise above their station through heroic deeds. The landed aristocracy, always the governing class, was increasingly interested in its own entertainment and preserving the eroding difference between itself and the rising middle class. Just across the channel revolutionary winds had blown and threatened to encroach even further on the class system. Writers like Jane Austen were more interested in middle class characters and their struggles and successes than in wealthy land owners. Their characterizations of the aristocracy came out looking selfish and disinterested in any greater good beyond their own pocketbooks and mirrors. Naval heroes were not only in the newspapers, but also in the pages of novels, demonstrating their deeds in detail to an eager, expectant audience. Men in uniform were automatically accepted as respectable and honorable and often took advantage of that status, but it was a stereotype that existed because many men were truly

interested in serving their country and defending and expanding the British Empire.

In more recent years, authors have taken this period up again and written about the early nineteenth century. Patrick O'Brian's notable Master and Commander series chronicles the life and career of Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin, beginning in April of 1800 with the war against Napoleon in full swing. Using the solid concept present in the period of what it means to be a masculine man, O'Brian creates, in Jack Aubrey, what I will call a Consummate Masculinity. That is, he is in every way what the ideal man could or should be. Every category required to make a masculine man is present in the character of Jack and could not be better represented. His perfection is not even marred by that shiny annoyance of perfection. His foibles, a love of wit though a lack of ability to put his own into practice, his gullibility on land, an ever present love of a "good wench" serve to disarm us as readers and accept him as the imperfectly perfect representation of a masculine man.

Stephen Maturin presents the perfect counter to everything that Jack is. In every way that Jack is Consummately Masculine, Stephen is decidedly not and yet he still manages to *be* masculine. In subsequent chapters (4 and 5) I explore the two characters and identify just what can be said about the combination. In order to do that we first have to look at the period closely, to see what the society expected from its men and to show, through various literary works, how the most desirable men were depicted compared to the most villainous, conceited and self-involved men. By looking primarily at Jane Austen's writings –both because she gives great representations of masculine and less-than-masculine men and because Patrick O'Brian's own writing closely emulates her's–

we get an accurate idea of what masculine ideals were present. Then it is possible to see just exactly how O'Brian is accomplishing a Consummate Masculinity through Jack Aubrey and by examining Stephen's character we can see that it is no longer possible to be Consummately Masculine.

CHAPTER TWO

FORMATIONS OF MASCULINITY: GROWING UP MALE IN EARLY
NINETEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND

No man has ever been born a man. As “gender is always a doing” (Butler 25), that doing must always be learned. Becoming a man, becoming masculine, requires learning. Since it is society in general that defines what is and what is not a good representation of a masculine man, this learning must come from society. However, the roles of masculinity and femininity are not usually very clearly defined. It might be obvious that, in the nineteenth century, men do not wear dresses and women do, but the rules of masculinity and femininity are much deeper than that. A London prostitute may wear a dress and yet be less feminine than some of the high class gentlemen she encounters on the street. Just what those rules are is a difficult bit of information to come by, primarily because most people cannot simply list them. As Judith Butler states, gender as a doing is “not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed” (25). That is to say, a man does not pre-exist his identity as masculine. A man comes into consciousness as a man, or as a young boy, already performing various aspects of masculinity. It is crucial that he should have the best instructors, but where he should find them is not easy for him to discover. If gender must be learned, and it is not easily overtly defined, then it must be learned through example rather than through instruction. Every man must know something of masculinity, yet he must also find it hard to pass on verbally if the core of his identity as masculine predates his understanding of himself as a

person. I find it impossible to explain the difference between thinking in language v.s. thinking in images because my knowledge of how to explain anything is caught up in my understanding of language. Similarly, it is difficult to explain what it means to be a man, if my understanding of what a man is, as opposed to a woman, is caught up in my understanding of myself as a man. Some aspects of masculinity will necessarily be formed very early though the process of becoming masculine continues through boyhood and on into manhood. For a young man to develop a strong, secure sense of masculinity it is at the very least helpful that he should be exposed, as early as possible, to strong masculine examples. In the early nineteenth century, there are several different types of young boys representing very different experiences in forming masculinity in England.

There were the poorest of the poor with no one and nothing to support and / or protect them, to be represented here by the character of Oliver Twist. There were young men born of some privilege, but not going to gain an inheritance, for one reason or another, such as the son of a merchant or the second son in an aristocratic family, an example of which is young Edmund Bertram of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. There were also first born sons of good family who were given allowances as young men and would inherit fortunes upon the death of their father. It is obvious that these three types of young boys experience life differently and have very different expectations for future prospects. The most fortunate of the three is, of course, the young boy who will eventually inherit land and title. He has little with which to concern himself. Consequently, he primarily concerns himself with his own amusement and somehow assumes that the rest of the world is as caught up with him as he is himself. The negative

result of this kind of upbringing is seen in Sir Walter Eliot of Austen's *Persuasion*.

Another character, not so far along in the process as Sir Walter, is Thomas Bertram, the oldest son of Sir Thomas Bertram who has accrued large debts requiring that he come live at home again so that his father can keep a better eye on him. Young men like these have very little inducement to find an occupation, even less to do something so rash as to join the Navy – an option that will become more enticing as we explore the less fortunate young men. Indeed, as we will see in greater detail in chapter three, Sir Walter has grown to hate the profession and all of those employed in it.

The young boy who is slightly less fortunate than the Thomas Bertrams and the Sir Walter Eliots, does have some concerns, for he must have a living and, since he will not inherit in the normal course of events, he must earn it eventually. We see a conversation between Edmund and young Miss Crawford that illuminates the options presented to such a young man as he nears adulthood. Miss Crawford has been surprised to discover that Edmund, the younger son of Sir Thomas Bertram, has decided to become a clergyman. Edmund says, “‘Why should it surprise you? You must suppose me designed for some profession, and might perceive that I am neither a lawyer, nor a soldier, nor a sailor.’ ‘Very true; but, in short, it had not occurred to me’” (Austen, *Mansfield* 91-92). It is logical to Edmund, given that she knows his status as the younger son, she must know he will not inherit. She also must have realized that he was not a lawyer nor, for lack of uniform, a soldier or a sailor. The logical conclusion then, in Edmund's mind, is that he should be a clergyman.

After having established that there is no rich uncle to provide for Edmund, Miss

Crawford comments, ““But why are you to be a clergyman? I thought that was always the lot of the youngest, where there were many to choose before him”” (Austen, *Mansfield* 92). She clearly doesn’t understand why he would submit to becoming a member of the cloth when there are several other options open to him, the options mentioned by Edmund previously. She would have expected him to become a sailor or a soldier; she even suggests that there is still time for him to abandon the cloth and become a lawyer. The discussion of Edmund’s profession continues over the space of several scenes. He is trying to convince her that his is a worthy profession, she trying to change his mind. The issue at point here is the fact that she never tries to bring in other possibilities. For instance, they do not even consider that Edmund might be an instructor, though he has studied at Oxford. He also never considers becoming a medical man. While he is likely qualified to pursue either of these professions, they are not socially acceptable to a man of his status, nor would they provide the kind of living he would require as the son of Sir Thomas Bertram.

In fact, one of the arguments against Edmund joining the clergy is the fact that the living will not be as great and certainly will not afford the same opportunity for achieving notoriety as any of the other possible professions. While he looks forward to an already-provided living on his father’s estate, he looks forward also to a life of relative obscurity. While Edmund, and Fanny Price for that matter, are perfectly aware of and comfortable with that fact, Miss Crawford, who has been growing ever fonder of the younger Mr. Bertram, would rather be attached to a man of a little more consequence. While she suggests that Edmund become a lawyer, it is likely due to the fact that he seems more

inclined to non-violent intellectual labor combined with the fact that his age is beginning to close some of the once-open doors. It is more probable to achieve notoriety as a lawyer than as a clergyman, but the opportunities for advancement and glory are certainly much greater in the Army and the Navy.

For a young man of Edmund's age, the Army would be a much more logical choice. He wouldn't have to have been in the service from a very young age in order to qualify for advancement whereas, in the Navy, to rise to the rank of lieutenant one had to have already put in a number of years as a midshipman. Additionally, the Army of the early nineteenth century had a militia faction which remained at home. It would have been possible for Edmund to join a regiment without having to leave his native land. Since the militia was created to counter the threat of invasion by France, there was little real work to be done. Of course, that also left little opportunity for legitimate advancement—that is, distinguishing oneself on the battlefield to the approval of superior officers— though there were other ways to achieve higher rank in the Army at those times as Tim Fulford brings up in “Sighing for a Soldier.” He illustrates the painful scandal in 1808 surrounding the Duke of York who was then the commander in chief of the Army. It seems as though any officer desirous of promotion needed only pay the right amount of money to the right person, one mistress of the Duke of York.

If a younger son were truly interested in achieving glory and wealth, given his choices of law, the cloth, the Army or the Navy, the Navy would have been the most likely place to find all three, though he would have had to endure hardship and, as Patrick O'Brian's Jack Aubrey generally says, avoid being knocked on the head. As is evidenced

by Edmund's responses to Miss Crawford, whichever profession the young gentleman chose had to be decided fairly early on. The point is moot by the time she takes it up because, with the possible exception of a very immoral militia commission, Edmund had to have decided his fate by the time he met Miss Crawford. That is why she doesn't tell him he should join the Navy or the Army, but rather suggests that he might still study law since, like the clergy, law requires the type of education he had.

Had Edmund been willing and able to join the Navy, he would have been presented with a much different set of circumstances. Fulford states that the Navy was more successful. Part of the reason stemmed from the fact that the Navy had more experience with engagements in general than did the Army. During the period of the Napoleonic wars England's Navy was at war, off and on, with the French, Spanish, Dutch, and American navies to say nothing of the privateers and pirates they encountered. There were naval encounters happening all the time, compared to the occasional fight on land. More to the point, perhaps, is the fact that more was required of naval officers than of Army officers. We must keep in mind that a naval lieutenant was required to spend a number of years in service as a midshipman—two, to be precise, with at least four more years on the ship's books in some capacity or other—before being allowed to attempt the examination that would allow his advancement. Many young men never “passed” for lieutenant and would spend the remainder of their careers in the Navy as a warrant officer (such as a master, bosun, gunner etc).

After a minimum of six years, sometimes longer, a lieutenant would be in the beginning of his career still trying to be prominent enough in the execution of successful

actions for superiors to notice. To be mentioned in an official report meant almost certain promotion. Also in the minds of young naval officers was the ever-present possibility of prize money. When an enemy ship was captured, it would be brought back to a home port and condemned as a legal prize (provided all applicable rules had been followed). Then the ship's crew would divide up the worth of the condemned ship according to rank. A worthy captain in a lucky ship could possibly make his fortune through the legalized piracy of taking prizes of enemy ships. If a captain were brilliant and had influence with the admiralty according to family background, there was the opportunity of being granted title.

There was a good deal of incentive for young men like Thomas Bertram to join the Navy. Looking at the even less fortunate, the option becomes both greater and more of a sacrifice. The options, if they can be called that, available to a young boy of poor family or no family were much different. All of the previously discussed options require money and / or influence. Law and the clergy required education. The Army and Navy at least required a young officer to purchase his uniform and, in the case of the Navy, there was considerable influence required to encourage a captain to accept a new midshipman who would need an incredible amount of training while he learned the ropes. For a young boy with no family and no fortune, the professional choices were bleak and the decision would have been made much earlier than in Edmund Bertram's case. We can get a good idea of what it would have been like by looking closely at Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. Here is a young boy, about the age of nine, who literally has no family and no money. He is manipulated out of the orphanage, where things weren't very good for him to begin

with. In fact, his young friend has died by the time Oliver returns, giving us the impression that he too might have died if he had been allowed to stay. He is starving as he attempts to make the trip to London and seems to be forced into making the choice between dying and joining with the Artful Dodger, really not much of a choice at all.

In helping Oliver, Dodger seals, or at least attempts to seal, his fate. From such a hard beginning as Oliver had, we, modern readers that is, might expect him to be further along the way to becoming a hardened criminal himself, though he certainly is nothing of the sort. Actually, the reason he allows Dodger to help him is that he trusts implicitly. In trusting Dodger, Oliver allows himself to be brought before and placed under the “protection” of Fagin. As Larry Wolff states: “Fagin’s campaign to make Oliver a thief may... be understood as a far more comprehensive assault upon the innocence of the child” (231-232). Oliver is the innocent young boy thrown to the wolves and Fagin is the corrupting influence. As the title of the article by Wolff suggests, we commonly assume that “The Boys are Pickpockets, and the Girl is a Prostitute.” The title actually comes from a statement made by Dickens in a forward to a later edition of the novel. Through these circumstances and assumptions we might begin to understand that Oliver is presented with the choice of starvation or thievery. He can either steal or eat. When he was on the road to London, while he was literally starving, he didn’t truly have this choice because, being innocent, he didn’t conceive of that alternate possibility. Now he is being coached in the best ways to steal. Fagin’s connections are borrowing Oliver and forcing him to take part in their crime. Putting the point very bluntly, Wolff quotes an anecdotal story told by Henry Mayhew of a twelve-year-old boy on the brink of

starvation:

As if by a sudden impulse he went up to an old gentleman, walking slowly in Hyde-park, and said to him, "Sir, I've lived three weeks by begging, and I'm starving now; give me sixpence, or I'll go and steal." The gentleman stopped and looked at the boy, in whose tone there must have been truthfulness, and in whose face was no doubt starvation, for without uttering a word he gave the young applicant a shilling. (241)

While Oliver is an idealized example of an innocent young boy being corrupted, this nameless young man is, perhaps, a more realistic example of what young boys can possibly do simply to survive. They can choose a career in crime, or they can continue to eke by as beggars.

The primary thrust of Wolff's article demonstrates a darker fate for young boys without support. Dickens maintained, at least officially, that the boys were pickpockets and the girl was a prostitute. Wolff goes on to quote Mayhew many more times in showing the typical gendering of crime that happened in the Victorian period. There are subtle hints, though, that Wolff examines to show that there were plenty of young boy prostitutes in London at that time and, consequently, represented in Dickens' novel. The hints are subtle, especially in *Oliver Twist*, but they are there. Wolff examines things like, Fagin's excitement at the prospect of corrupting Oliver more so than any other boy because of his looks (Wolff 233) and the scene where Monks, upon being left alone, summons up a boy who had been hidden down below (Wolff 242). With these and many other implications, Wolff shows how Oliver may be in danger of having been recruited as a prostitute as well as a thief. His chances of being able to grow up into a strong, masculine man are slim. He might be able to become a criminal mastermind like Fagin

or a brute like Sikes, but a Consummate Masculinity is not possible from the options before him.

For some young boys in Oliver's situation there was another option, though it isn't exactly clear how this option could become available. Every ship needed a crew of small boys who were not young gentlemen in training to become midshipmen. The boys would serve primarily as a means of transporting gun powder from the magazine to the canons on deck during battle. They were an integral part of the system in an environment where there was hardly any room to maneuver. For a full grown man to run back and forth from each gun to the powder magazine wouldn't be practical amidst the chaos. But it was possible for small boys to make their way up several decks through the smoke and recoiling canons, sweating straining men urgently preparing each gun for another round. Certainly it was a dangerous profession. The ship might be boarded, taken as a prize, or sunk outright, any of which could have disastrous consequences for a young boy. However, if he did survive, a young boy stood a good chance at acquiring a living upon reaching an appropriate age. Growing up at sea would make for a good, experienced sailor. He would never be able to become a commissioned officer since there would be no one to use their influence with a captain to take him aboard and he wouldn't be able to purchase a uniform anyway. He would have to be a foremast jack, but could potentially work up to become a warrant officer like a bosun who kept order aboard ship, a master in charge of sailing the ship, or a cook. Even if he never rose above a common sailor, perhaps an Able Seaman, or even an Ordinary Seaman, his options would necessarily look much brighter than those presented to Oliver in the sense that they wouldn't require

him to break the law in order to survive and so he wouldn't be afraid of being arrested at every turn. Of course his life would be threatened, but it would be in service of his country and he could take pride in his duty. He would be able to see in other men and eventually demonstrate qualities like courage, self-reliance and an attentiveness to duty. He would be exposed not only to masculine examples in his fellow foremast jacks, but in the officers as well. While there wouldn't be a Fagin on board, our young sailor still might run the risk of being used sexually by members of the crew. Officially, pederasty was illegal in the royal Navy, punishable by death, but the fact that there was a law implies that there was a need for the law. Life on board ship might be hard for a young boy; it was certainly hard for the grown men, but it would afford him the opportunity to grow up among other men.

The options were bleak for most young boys unless they were born into a family with money and / or privilege. For all but the most wealthy, the inheriting, landed aristocrats, the Navy offered an excellent option for many purposes. Though Edmund Bertram opted for the clergy, even the very pious could find employment in the Navy if they were only to consider the benefits of serving their king and country. For those less fortunate it was not only a viable option, but perhaps the most viable option for making a living and fulfilling an occupation that brought dignity, honor, and respect. An officer could become wealthy and an ordinary seaman could feed and clothe and house his family back home while holding their heads high in contemplation of the fact that they were part of the line of defense keeping Napoleon off British soil.

CHAPTER THREE

A NINETEENTH CENTURY MASCULINITY: MASCULINE
QUALITIES IN PERIOD TEXTS

Professor Tim Fulford, who has written extensively on late eighteenth and early nineteenth century gender issues, specifically relating to masculinity, identifies the qualities that make a man masculine in the nineteenth century as “patriotism, self-reliance, courage, paternalism, and, above all, attentiveness to duty” (“Romanticizing” 162). These five traits provide the lens through which we can see masculinity in the early nineteenth century and O’Brian’s representation of masculinity from the period. While other critics have written about masculinity in the nineteenth century, none have so eloquently defined the traits as Fulford has here. Additionally, most of the discussion has been in light of the Victorian Period, which is pertinent to part of our exploration and will be dealt with in chapter six. Fulford, having focused specifically on the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, is crucial to our discussion of masculinity in the Napoleonic Wars. His work goes into specific detail in examining the qualities praised during the period as represented by various authors. In another article Fulford describes the state of affairs in the militia. The young officers were very popular at home. Young ladies aplenty were dazzled by the flashy uniforms and there were simply thousands of eligible young bachelors wherever the militia was encamped. As Fulford states, “Despite the alarm about a possible French invasion, the militia impressed the public more as a spectacle than as a fighting force” (“Sighing” 155). It had been the threat of invasion that

allowed the bill to pass, initially forming the militia. After a time, though, the people realized how spectacular it was to have an Army with all of the glorious men at home for everyone to enjoy. In fact, enjoyment became one of the chief enterprises of the militia, drawing a large audience from the fashionable until, “Not content with admiring the men’s uniforms, the Duchess [of Devonshire] and other society ladies played at being soldiers, to the admiration of the sightseers. The camp seemed... a theater of ‘social and sexual interchange’” (Fulford, “Sighing” 156). Fulford then goes on to chronicle some of the liaisons which were taking place in the camp at Coxheath (Kent) between soldiers’ wives and other soldiers who didn’t happen to be their husbands. Beyond a sort of free love agreement between the officers and their wives, the young bachelor officers were unleashed upon the young women of the town and “For the inhabitants of English villages... the militia was, if not overpaid, definitely oversexed and over here” (Fulford, “Sighing” 156).

We must remember that the militia was not the only branch of the Army. There were plenty of soldiers who went overseas and fought Napoleon on his (or someone else’s) territory. They wouldn’t have been at home and, while they may have engaged in illicit affairs of one sort or another, at least the offences wouldn’t have been perpetrated on their own countrymen. Here also was a more definite possibility for glory through bravery, advancement through honorable distinction in victory, and a chance to truly defend the country against a real enemy instead of a threat only. Sadly the state of the Army abroad wasn’t incredibly glamorous. Fulford notes that “For much of the Napoleonic period, soldiers appeared to be as incompetent in battle as they were

dangerous in barracks. Corruption seemed to spread from the top down, and the Army seemed dogged by aristocratic self-indulgence just when Britain wanted heroes to prove its power and manliness against the French” (“Sighing” 158). One of the incompetent things Fulford mentions concerns the Duke of York, before he became the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and was only a general fighting in the Netherlands. It seems as though he became confused and moved his troops to a bad position which required that he immediately move them back to where they had been. The result, marching troops back and forth, came across as inept leadership. Another example of incompetence happened “in late 1808, at the Convention of Cintra, the generals fighting the French in Spain and Portugal surrendered their advantage and let Napoleon’s Army escape” (Fulford, “Sighing” 160). Whether it might be argued that the Army abroad was more moral, it cannot be said that it was an excellent, successful, entity.

The three things that most seemed to be driving the push for a truly masculine man who fit the qualities listed above were “aristocratic sexual immorality, financial corruption, and the Army on whose strength the fight against Napoleon depended” (Fulford, “Romanticizing” 165). It makes sense, during a time when England was threatened by physical invasion from Napoleon’s Army and ideological invasion from the revolutionary ideas, that something would be demanded of the men above and beyond sodomy and gross self-interest. It will be useful, then, to look at the representations found in the literature of the period of the men, both those who represent the ideal and those who do not.

The first of the traits in Fulford’s list is patriotism. In many ways it might be said

that patriotism is the same as attentiveness to duty. While the two certainly overlap, one would hardly be inclined to perform a duty to the crown without the motivation of patriotism, but they are different in significant ways. Yes, patriotism provides an impetus to perform a duty to the crown, but it goes beyond that—at least, it should in a truly masculine man. A great example can be seen in the writings of Captain Frederick Marryat. Marryat was an officer in the royal Navy beginning in the early 1800's and continuing through the 1820's when he resigned his commission and began to write full time (Douglas). His novel *Peter Simple* describes the progress of a young man from his initiation to the Navy as a midshipman through the rank of Post Captain and his ascension to the title of Viscount Lord Privilege. In exploring the creations of masculinity, we cannot be afforded a much greater illustration of a Consummate Masculinity than that of young Mr. Simple.

The beginning of the book tells us that, while he is of a moderately well placed family (his grandfather is, after all, Lord Privilege) he is sadly the fool of the family. His older brother will inherit his father's fortune, which is not considerable since Peter's father is the youngest of several brothers. As his father was forced into the church, Peter is forced into the Navy as a midshipman aboard His Majesty's ship *Diomedes*. It is important to note that while Peter's father hated the church both before and after he was forced to become a member of its clergy, Peter is not upset at the announcement of his new profession. He does, however, begin to demonstrate that, at least early in the novel, he very much fits his name. He makes no claims to great intelligence; he does not fight the labeling of himself as the greatest fool in the family:

It has been from time immemorial the heathenish custom to sacrifice the greatest fool of the family to the prosperity and naval superiority of the country, and at the age of fourteen, I was selected as the victim. If the custom be judicious, I had no reason to complain. There was not one dissentient voice, when it was proposed before all the varieties of my aunts and cousins.... (Marryat 2)

The language is that of a wizened narrator hinting at the real insult delivered upon the fool by the rest of his family, but Peter has no notion of being insulted. Quite the contrary, Marryat goes on to say:

Flattered by such a unanimous acknowledgment of my qualification, and a stroke of my father's hand down my head which accompanied it, I felt as proud, and alas! as unconscious as the calf with gilded horns, who plays and mumbles with the flowers of the garland which designates his fate to every one but himself. (2)

It is painfully clear to the rest of his family that a commission in the Royal Navy is nothing to be envied, but Peter doesn't see that. He is simple enough to feel honored and to begin to dream of glory and grandeur in his new post. He has begun his transition from the fool of the family to a successful member of society. We have the distinct impression that his visions of "a coach with four horses and a service of plate" (2) are the first of their kind to grace the poor Mr. Simple. It is no coincidence that they occur along with a "degree of military ardor" (2). For the first time Peter is allowed to think something of himself. Though his family sees his parting as getting rid of a fool, a sentiment that comes through in the narrator's tone, the result of that sacrifice is that he is the only member of his family, apart from his younger sister, to survive. He is also afforded the opportunity to impress his heretofore estranged grandfather. His family views the Navy as a dumping ground for worthless sons, but Peter sees the potential for success and feels

the beginnings of the ardor that kept Lord Nelson warm on a cold night. His family may not be very patriotic, but Peter is.

Similar to the attitude held by Peter's family, though to a much stronger degree, Sir Walter Eliot holds a standing disdain for the Navy and all those involved with it. He is the first character to whom we are introduced in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. We are given his history and a description that leaves very little to like. Austen sums him up succinctly when she says, "Vanity was the beginning and the end of Sir Walter Elliot's character; vanity of person and of situation" (4). Here is an incredibly conceited man interested primarily in himself and his eldest daughter because they two, among the many people in the world, seems to him to be truly attractive. We are told of Sir Walter that he derives amusement and consolation from the only book he ever took up of his own accord, the *Baronetage*. It is here that his own entry exists, to which page the favorite tome always opened. He prides himself on his heritage and hates the Navy in part because it allows men of no consequence to rise and receive titles. He states, "I have two strong grounds of objection to [the Navy]. First, as being the means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honours which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of; and secondly, as it cuts up a man's youth and vigour most horribly; a sailor grows old sooner than any other man" (Austen, *Persuasion* 14). The reasons Sir Walter is disdainful of the Navy show his lack of patriotism.

It was possible for men, previously of little or no consequence, to rise to levels of some distinction in the Navy. For most, achieving rank has a lot to do with influence and connection. Men who already possess influence and connection, though they may have

entered the Navy, would already be acceptable to some degree in Sir Walter's eyes, as they are connected to great and important people. The men he truly despises are those who have no or very little connection and rise to distinction anyway, men like Clarence O'Brien who risk their lives to destroy the last cannon so the French won't be able to attack the retreating ship (an example I discuss in greater detail later). The only way men like this can rise to distinction is through incredible acts of bravery in the service of the king. Sir Walter despises these men because of their heritage and their desire to rise above it. In doing so he is despising some of the greatest servants of the nation. Without brave men defending the nation, Sir Walter might have found himself contemplating the intricacies of a guillotine. Additionally, he complains at having to look at men whose youth and vigor have been cut up "most horribly." Again he despises men who have sacrificed in order to protect Britain. Sir Walter cares nothing for the function of the military, the preservation and expansion of the great British Empire, he hates it only because it inconveniences him. He hates the men who serve the country and so hates his country. That Sir Walter lacks patriotism helps us understand that this lack is decidedly not a desirable trait. We are not driven to emulate his disdain for the Navy, rather we are induced to respect the Navy all the more for his vilification of it.

In a very short time Peter Simple earns the affection of his captain and the first lieutenant, and shortly thereafter his commanding officers challenge him to become more than just the fool of the family. His first day on ship, Peter has just come up on deck to hear the lieutenant shouting orders. As Peter approaches the lieutenant says to him, "Youngster, hand me that monkey's tail." Peter laments:

I saw nothing like a monkey's tail, but I was so frightened that I snatched up the first thing that I saw, which was a short bar of iron, and it so happened that it was the very article which he wanted. When I gave it to him, the first lieutenant looked at me, and said, "So you know what a monkey's tail is already, do you? Now don't you ever sham stupid after that. (Marryat 41)

Peter considers himself lucky after this incident, but resolves "to learn the names of everything as fast as [he] could, that [he] might be prepared" (41). Though Peter credits his fear with his success, it is through an instinctual habit of self-reliance that he picks up the correct object. He might have stared blankly at the lieutenant or asked him what a monkey's tail was, but he doesn't. He takes a quick look down, sees something that looks a little like a monkey's tail and acts. He might have been wrong, but even if he had handed the wrong item to the lieutenant, he wouldn't have looked worse off than if he had hesitated in indecision or waited for full confirmation as to exactly what it was the lieutenant wanted. In a Navy where communication is sketchy at best, the failure or success of any endeavor depends greatly on the ability of each of the officers to make decisions for himself. Peter isn't sure, but he makes an educated guess and, as it turns out, he is correct and the lieutenant is pleased with his performance.

Having the lieutenant charge him never to "sham stupid after that" could have caused Peter to despair at having the lieutenant think he is really very smart, when he himself knows he is only a fool. He doesn't do that, though. Given the opportunity to rise from his label of ignorance and folly, he takes it and applies himself wholeheartedly to learn everything about the Navy and His Majesty's ship as quickly as he can. Of course he can't learn everything without much time passing, but he is always quick to

learn and eager to see something new. He is no longer completely buying into his family's definition of himself. If he were fully convinced of his status as a fool he would think it pointless even to attempt learning such a complicated collection of mechanisms and traditions as exist on a man-of-war. On some level Peter is taking his identity into his own hands and forging it anew amid the ropes of the *Diomedé*.

We identified with Peter earlier through his helplessness, and continue to see his qualities as his character develops. We admire his qualities both because we understand that they are good qualities to have, and because they are qualities present in a character we are beginning to respect. That Peter is patriotic and self-reliant implies that good men are also patriotic and self-reliant. Were we to dislike Peter's character we would also dislike the qualities he displays, much like the character of Sir Walter Eliot. He continues to display the qualities he values, and as much as we dislike his character we also dislike his characteristics.

Sir Walter is appalled at the idea Admiral Croft and his wife to rent Kellynch Hall. He can't imagine a naval man, whose face would be "about as orange as the cuffs and capes of [his] livery" (Austen, *Persuasion* 16), will actually be living in Kellynch Hall. He goes to some extent in demonstrating the tremendous good fortune of any man of the Navy who should find himself in such luxury as to be the tenant of Sir Walter Eliot. Here, as Joseph Duffy discusses in "Structure and Idea in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*," Austen can be seen as setting up a comparison between "The decline of hereditary landed aristocracy and the ascendancy of the energetic naval class" (Duffy 274). It is fairly ironic that, while Sir Walter disdains his soon-to-be tenants, it is they,

and not him, who are able to afford living in the lavish, luxurious Kellynch Hall. Add to that the fact that for Sir Walter Kellynch represents an income from the surrounding lands. For the Crofts, it will represent only an expense as they pay for the right to live there. In the beginning of the novel, when Mr. Shepherd and Lady Russell are trying to convince Sir Walter to retrench and begin to dig himself out of debt, his response is incredulity as he proclaims, “What! every comfort of life knocked off! Journeys, London, servants, horses table—contractions and restrictions every where! To live no longer with the decencies even of a private gentleman! No, he would sooner quit Kellynch Hall at once, than remain in it on such disgraceful terms” (Austen, *Persuasion* 10). Again we see the irony of Sir Walter’s pride. He feels it an injustice to remain in his house under restrictions, but it is less of an injustice to quit the house altogether. Rather than stay and live in his own manor within his own means, he must rely upon others to manipulate him to leave his home while also relying on the financial means of the Crofts who otherwise might not even be invited to visit

Despite the fact that Sir Walter is a wealthy man who lives in a vast estate, he cannot seem to live within his means. We are told that, while she was alive, his late wife kept him in check and that Lady Russell performs that duty since her death. The fact remains that he cannot be trusted to manage his own money. This might not be such a condemnation, except for the fact that he isn’t interested in anything else. Sir Walter does not do anything. He should be able, then, to manage the only material concern which threatens to encroach upon his life of ease. At least he could have hired a man to manage his affairs. He cannot even do that, though. He relies on the interests of others, Lady

Russell and his lawyer who have a difficult time of it anyway. He cannot even be trusted to see good advice and take it. They have to manipulate him into letting Kellynch Hall in order to cut down his expenses.

As readers we cannot identify with Sir Walter and his disdainful capriciousness. Admiral Croft, on the other hand, shows nothing but a gentle, amiable nature. We begin to ask the question, as it seems Austen is making us, who is the better man and why? The answer to who is painfully easy to make. There really is no choice. Here the better man is in possession of the beloved Kellynch Hall and is certainly worth more money.

Admiral Croft has the land and the advantage of money, yet Sir Walter would never dream of considering this upstart better than he is because his value comes from his title and his ancestry.

Here we see evidence of Austen's critique on the aristocracy. How ludicrous is it for Sir Walter to value above all else the two features of himself about which he had no input? He thinks most of himself because his name exists in the *Baronetage* and because of his wonderful good looks. He could not have inserted himself into the *Baronetage* and, even if he had, by his own account it would have meant nothing because his father wouldn't have been of any importance. Neither could he have improved his looks. He is proud of his passive traits. Not only is he not self-reliant, Sir Walter seems to be diametrically opposed to the concept of relying upon oneself. That quality, displayed by Admiral Croft, which allows him to rise above his position by relying upon himself, is particularly odious to Sir Walter. He wants to rely on his privilege, on his station by birth, not on himself.

We continue to be drawn towards characters like Peter Simple and Clarence O'Brien while we are driven from characters like Sir Walter Eliot. While Sir Walter sits at home, digging himself further in debt and ultimately requires the intervention of close friends and odious strangers to bail him out of his financial predicament, Peter takes upon himself the initiative to act, to make an educated guess and do something. Peter is self-reliant.

A demonstration of courage can be seen in Peter, after he has received his orders to proceed to his ship, but before he actually gets there. As Peter Simple begins his journey to London where he will fit out and join his ship, we see just how simple he is. He is not, however, stupid. He is incredibly inexperienced in the world and, as is the custom in the Navy, he gains some experience very fast and provides amusement for his fellow officers along the way. Many potential examples occur in the course of the narrative. Peter is involved in a mock duel (which was mock in everyone's understanding but Peter's), he believes his captain to be a horribly mean man on the testimony of some other, more experienced midshipmen, and he proudly escorts a beautiful young lady across town in full view of his captain only later finding out that she had been a prostitute and his captain had been offended by the dishonorable display.

Despite his simpleness, Peter succeeds in making a very favorable impression on his captain. On the one hand, he had been simple enough, upon learning that he had been deceived regarding the character of the captain, to fight a duel that wasn't a real duel. He had been duped. On the other hand, in his mind at least, he had been willing to fight a duel on the basis of his insulted honor. Peter had discovered that the captain really wasn't

a fire-breathing devil, but that he was an honorable, just, gentleman. It is no wonder, then, that the captain was impressed when a new midshipman would take the threat of death to defend the honor of his new captain. Further, when the captain calls his midshipmen to task and asks them to identify who had intentionally lied about him to poor Mr. Simple, they of course won't confess. He puts the question to Mr. Simple and Peter refuses to answer. Peter states, "If you please, sir, I consider that I told you all that in confidence" (Marryat 49). The captain, of course, doesn't like his answer in light of the midshipmen getting off, but he respects Peter enough to allow him to keep his secret. It might have been seen as insubordination and the captain could have been infuriated by the lack of respect. Considering Peter's earnest claim to be a gentleman and his obvious concern with the well-being of his crew mates, it seems more likely that Peter is flouting a tradition, the severity of which he doesn't fully understand, with the intention of being respectable rather than undermining the captain's authority. Because, as the lieutenant states, "he may be a fool... but I can assure you he is a very straightforward one" (Marryat 49). If Peter had tried to circumvent the question, dodge responsibility or otherwise try to manipulate the captain into letting him and the other midshipmen off, he would certainly have been in great danger of being reprimanded himself. He is straightforward and so it is hard to imagine that he is manipulating, conniving, or deceiving his captain. He stands tall, takes any potential consequences that might come his way and so, through a figurative demonstration of his courage under fire he avoids any recriminations from his fellow midshipmen or his captain.

As the novel progresses, the issue of inheritance becomes an important one.

Peter's uncle, his father's only living older brother, would have been in line to inherit the title and land of their father, Lord Privilege, but he had begotten only daughters. He had no sons while Peter's father had one living son remaining. Lord Privilege, who has remained something of a mystery to this point in the novel, suddenly begins to invite his youngest son and grandson to the estate. Peter and his father visit Lord Privilege who is slightly cordial to them, showing some favor and helping Peter and his friend, Clarence O'Brien, to receive promotions through his influence with the Admiralty (a very necessary component of promotion in the Royal Navy). The promotion is a way in which Peter demonstrates his courageousness both to his grandfather and, incidentally, to us. Lord Privilege asks Peter as he and his father are about to leave for home after their first visit if there is anything Peter would ask of him before he goes. He intends to give his grandson a gift, something to show his increasing favor to the one who will, presumably, inherit land and title ultimately. Peter asks for a promotion for his good friend, Clarence O'Brien. Having recently passed for lieutenant, he doesn't presume to think he might be made commander, but if O'Brien, who is senior to Peter, might be made then Peter would be able to sail under his command. This selfless request pleases Lord Privilege who condescends to request a promotion for O'Brien. The expectation had been that Peter would request some keepsake, some bauble by which to remember his grandfather – a watch, perhaps. In making this request not only for promotion but for someone else's promotion, Peter is challenging the expectations of his father and his grandfather. He is not simpering before a rich and powerful man who has it in his influence to make or break young Peter. He sees a way in which his connection to Lord Privilege could benefit

both himself and his good friend and companion, and he takes a big chance. He might have offended his grandfather who is not overly friendly. Peter might have been refused his request, lost his potential inheritance, and had an influential man against him which would have destroyed completely any chance of his further success in the Navy. It is possible that his entire life could be ruined by not doing exactly what his grandfather expects of him, but Peter breaks that expectation anyway and his courage is rewarded.

Peter became the man he was partially because of what was inside him, his straightforwardness even while completely a fool otherwise and his adherence to the code of gentlemanly conduct. We can't ignore the influences of his very close friend and mentor Clarence O'Brien which helped him to maintain his standards in the face of a corrupt Navy. Peter certainly owes a great deal of the man he became to the man who took him under his wing, drubbing his ribs out of love. O'Brien demonstrates a paternal masculinity and Peter follows in his footsteps.

Early in the novel Peter experiences his first good storm at sea. He hasn't suffered from sea sickness up to this point, but this puts him down and he doesn't seem likely to recover anytime soon. On the seventh day of Peter's sickness, O'Brien comes to him and informs him that, if he never exerts himself he will never recover. Peter says of O'Brien, "He drubbed me on the ribs without mercy, until I thought the breath was out of my body, and then he took out a rope's end and thrashed me until I obeyed his orders to go on deck immediately" (Marryat 90). We can certainly see Peter's side of this occurrence and sympathize with him. None of us would like to be beaten for being sick and when we see Peter crying in the next sentence we are not surprised. It is a pitiable

state to be sure. Added to the horror of being beaten comes the assurance from O'Brien that he is doing this for Peter's benefit, that he has taken Peter under his wing and is administering a form of medicine. This sounds like lunacy to our ears, or at least the base justification of some psychotic, violently insane person. But we must take into account the medical practices of this period before we condemn O'Brien to insanity. First and foremost is the fact that diagnostic medicine in the 1800's was in its infancy. Medical men had been practicing for many years, but the foremost scientists of the day were still convinced that the body ran according to the humors and most disorders resulted from a disruption in some fluid or other (Estes 38). Additionally, as Patrick O'Brien shows over and over in his novels, seamen were incredibly irrational creatures, especially when it came to medicine. Superstitions reigned supreme in a society, before the mast and abaft, where education and intellectualism were not hot commodities. Men could be competent sailors and command great respect from their peers without even being able to read or write let alone understand the functions of internal organs. Then, even if they did, they would be sadly misinformed as per current understandings of medicine and medical practice. In the mind of an ordinary seaman, and indeed in the minds of most captains as well, medicine was supposed to have drastic effects which generally meant "spending the whole of the next day on the seat of ease" (O'Brien, *Truelove* 16).

Considering that Clarence O'Brien had plenty of experience with seasickness and likely had been given such a cure in his early days aboard ship, that there was little likelihood that he would have understood a clinical definition of seasickness even if one had existed at the time and that no other cure was known for the illness, his treatment of

Peter wasn't terribly out of line nor was it without compassion. Truly, as we soon find out, O'Brien's cure was very compassionate and not at all uncalled-for. He went above and beyond the call of duty in order to help a sick shipmate. We can see all of these sentiments expressed in O'Brien's response to Peter's claim that the cure was not very pleasant. "Pleasant! You simple Simple, when did you ever hear of physic [medicine] being pleasant, unless a man prescribes for himself? I suppose you'd be after lollipops for the yellow fever. Live and larn, boy, and thank Heaven that you've found somebody who loves you well enough to baste you when it's good for your health" (Marryat 91).

If all of this were not enough to convince us that O'Brien really is out for Peter's best, he closes all argument in saying, "since you've been ill I've been eating your pork and drinking your grog... And now that I've cured you, you'll be tucking all that into your own little bread-basket, so that I'm no gainer" (Marryat 91). Grog (watered down rum) is considered by British sailors to be virtually an unalienable human right. One of the greatest disciplines a sailor can receive, right under a full on flogging with the cat-o-nine tails, is to have his grog stopped. Also, even on full rations a sailor eats precious little, most of which is not meat. For O'Brien to receive a double portion of both grog and pork was a very desirable thing. And notice that, despite his proven love for Peter, he waited six full days before he administered his special medicine. Sure he probably figured that Peter would come out of it on his own, but he wasn't worried for six days. On the seventh morning he decided that it was time Peter was done being sick.

This beating that O'Brien calls medicine hits nearly all of the virtues of masculinity as outlined in Tim Fulford's "Romanticizing the Empire." O'Brien was self-

reliant in that he didn't run to the ship's surgeon; he took charge of the situation and administered Peter's cure himself. O'Brien was paternal in that he was taking Peter under his wing. Indeed, we find out, after Peter returns to his regular duties, that O'Brien has already talked to the first Lieutenant and had Peter switched to his watch so that he could better keep an eye on the young midshipman. It is fairly obvious that O'Brien sees Peter's health and his upbringing as part of his duty. If O'Brien takes Peter under his wing and is going to be self-reliant, then it is his duty to do something about his seasickness. In this case it is the sense of duty that demands action and paternalism that defines what that action should be.

We see Peter's character progress as the issue of inheritance becomes more complicated. Peter's aunt becomes pregnant. Through a masterfully constructed deception, Peter's uncle switches his own new-born daughter with a new-born boy and thus produces an heir. He willingly condemns his own child to a life of relative poverty and hardship (though it turns out that she dies as an infant due to her new "mother's" inattentiveness) while taking a complete stranger into his home based solely on the fact that the stranger affords him the opportunity to further his own interests. He then ascends to the title and Peter is completely written out of the late Lord Privilege's will. This deception is enough to cause Peter's father to quickly descend into madness from which he never recovers and dies a few years later. Peter endures, though. He stands in his father's place as head of the household, looking after the interests of his sister and the monetary concerns of the family. He hates what his uncle has done and does not accept it passively, but he is more concerned with the interests of his sister, his young wife to be,

and his best friend Captain O'Brien than he is with his own future wealth or poverty. And here the novel takes an interesting turn. The older man, O'Brien, who is senior on the list of promotion and has been a mentor to this point, becomes the one who needs to be cared for. O'Brien's influence in the Navy is considerable, but on shore he loses ground. As an Irishman who has been sending money home to his family, he has no influential relatives nor any vast quantities of money to recommend him. Because Peter has used his influence to facilitate O'Brien's promotions, Clarence has committed himself to making sure that Peter inherits in place of his uncle. O'Brien is ultimately unsuccessful, though. When the news arrives of the untimely death both of Peter's uncle and his illegitimate heir, the transformation is complete. Peter has been caring for his sister and his young wife and now he takes O'Brien under his wing. He gives the permission for his sister and O'Brien to marry, having taken care to make sure that it was in the best interests of both parties. Peter's transformation to the paternal authority continues beyond the three characters mentioned. Generally, people who were in positions of authority over him, whether due to higher rank or more experience, come back into the story later and he has become some sort of authority over them. In all cases, especially those who had treated him poorly, Peter takes great care to be just, fair, and honest.

Where Peter takes great pains to make sure his sister is taken care of, Sir Walter brings critique upon himself in the form of his relationship to his daughters. He cannot be considered a good father. He only maintains a relationship with one, the eldest with whom he shares the best of looks in the country. She is described as having the same

type of personality as her father and the two of them get along well. The only real deviation in temperament between the two comes in Elizabeth's reaction to the *Baronetage*. As she is 29 years old and not yet married, she is beginning to become uneasy and fears that she may never marry. This may seem a small matter, but the fact is that Sir Walter Elliot does nothing in the entire scope of the novel to further Elizabeth's prospects. He does entertain his nephew, the heir presumptive, but only at young Mr. Elliot's initiative. Sir Walter approves of the potential match between young Mr. Elliot and one of his daughters, but he never goes out of his way to attempt to make a match for his oldest daughter. At a time when young women were expected to be passive entities, this was a very gross neglect. As Sir Walter cares first and foremost for and about himself, he never takes notice of Elizabeth's apprehension. We might forgive him this fault, perhaps even imagining that it came from a misguided sense of attachment, that he couldn't bear to see his oldest daughter, the one with whom he was so close, depart from his side. If that were the case with Elizabeth, we would still be forced to reckon with his relationship with Anne and Mary, the two younger girls. Mary is a married woman and no longer lives at home. In addition, she is a tiresome person, always imagining herself to be ill. It is no wonder that anyone, Sir Walter included, would be loathe to spend a great deal of time with Mary. Beyond his avoidance or simply not seeking Mary out, Sir Walter gives her the worst criticism he can. He mentions, after she has gone, that her looks were not what they had been. He is so over concerned with appearances that her tiresomeness doesn't receive notice, but her failing looks, after having given birth to two children, makes him uncomfortable.

Anne, on the other hand, lives at home and is, as the heroine of the story, the epitome of the dutiful daughter. She is useful, wise, caring, and compassionate. Sir Walter hardly gives her the time of day. In fact, as he and Elizabeth are preparing to remove from Kellynch Hall, they decide that Mrs. Clay will be of much more use to them than Anne. Elizabeth's words are, "I am sure Anne had better stay, for nobody will want her in Bath" (Austen, *Persuasion* 23). These are not Sir Walter's words, but he abides by them, giving his consent through his actions. Anne stays behind while Mrs. Clay attends Sir Walter and Elizabeth to Bath. While we could go back and forth about reasons for Sir Walter's actions, it is at least plain to see that he is not a loving paternal figure in the life of any of his children, especially Anne.

Again, we see robust figures like Clarence O'Brien and Peter Simple demonstrating the kinds of traits that Fulford has outlined while our pet villain, Sir Walter, continues to lack what we are considering good masculine traits.

A sense of duty is important, above all, to a nation that relies heavily on the self-reliance of its operatives. Without perfect communication across great distances, many, especially military, men had to make their own decisions for the good of the nation or the service. If most of the men involved in furthering the British Empire acted in their own best interests as opposed to the best interests of the nation, the empire would stand very little chance of remaining stable, let alone expanding. attentiveness to duty that considered first the best course of action for the nation or the service is represented as a very positive masculine trait. We see very positive examples in Peter Simple and Clarence O'Brien, and an excellent demonstration of what a lack of concern for duty

looks like in Sir Walter Eliot.

Fairly early in Marryat's novel, Peter is hurt during an on-shore raid of a French battery. Instead of leaving him to be captured, O'Brien tries to carry Peter back to the ship. They are both captured, but Peter is able to see and feel firsthand what it is like for another person to put his interests first. They are treated as the gentlemen they are. Peter immediately takes the chance to write to their captain and explain the valiant efforts of O'Brien during the raid which, while they succeeded in the destruction of the guns, meant that they both were captured. O'Brien had put the success of the mission and Peter's interests above any concern for his own person. Peter takes O'Brien's example and doesn't attempt in any way to make himself look good in the letter, he simply tries, and succeeds, to give O'Brien credit for his valiant actions. Their gentleman "captor," also Peter's future father-in-law, sends the letter for Peter which was written because Peter, "knew [O'Brien] never would tell himself" (Marryat 209). Peter ends his account of the letter by saying, "O'Brien never knew that I had sent that letter, as the colonel, at my request, kept the secret" (Marryat 210).

The letter was necessary because of O'Brien's lack of self interest, he didn't want to brag about his own accomplishments, and it was kept secret because of Peter's lack of self interest, he didn't want O'Brien to feel indebted to him. It is through a sense of duty, to the good of the service, seeing good actions made known and rewarded, and a sense of duty to the other that each of them acted. Peter knows that O'Brien will never boast about himself, and if he did he wouldn't be taken seriously. The only way for their captain to find out about O'Brien's noble actions is for Peter to write about them.

Similarly, O'Brien has taken Peter under his wing and is helping him both to learn the ways of the Navy and to keep him alive. If he had left Peter to the French, he would have been neglecting his paternal duty to his young friend. If he had neglected the last gun so that the two of them could have escaped, he would have been shirking his duty to the good of the service. The French may have been able to seriously damage their nearby ship with one gun, perhaps cripple it to the point that it could have been captured. The only way to assure that the ship will get away and that Peter won't be left alone to the mercy of the French is to spike the last gun himself and stay with Peter. If he had neglected either of these duties he would have been safer. Likely wouldn't have been reprimanded, the decision for self preservation is understandable, but neither would he have been honored or promoted. The absolute best fulfillment of his duty, in this situation, requires a great deal of self sacrifice.

Peter and O'Brien both sacrifice of themselves so that others may benefit. Sir Walter's mind-set seems to be that he believes others should sacrifice so that he may benefit. He has no sense of duty associated with his privilege and possession. At one point Mrs. Clay, in an attempt to ingratiate Sir Walter, expresses the sentiment concerning good looks and various professions. She states:

I have long been convinced, though every profession is necessary and honourable in its turn, it is only the lot of those who are not obliged to follow any, who can live in a regular way, in the country, choosing their own hours, following their own pursuits, and living on their own property, without the torment of trying for more; it is only their lot, I say, to hold the blessings of health and good appearance to the utmost: I know no other set of men but what lose something of their personableness when they cease to be quite young. (Austen, *Persuasion* 15)

Here is expressed a complete and total lack of duty. If Sir Walter is living on his own in the country following his own pursuits and setting his own hours, one might ask just what service he is providing the rest of the country, or the rest of humanity for that matter. He seems to think it sufficient to simply provide the rest of England with the joy of his presence, or perhaps with the honor of knowing that he exists in Kellynch Hall. Where once it was the duty and privilege of the aristocracy to rule the country, it seems that even that is no longer ideal. While it still may occur, the idea, as we have it from Mrs. Clay and Sir Walter, is to do nothing and so preserve the natural good looks that so many of the other denizens of the country aren't able to appreciate. The good of the nation is not as important as the personal vanity which breeds disdain for all those who are actually benefitting the country.

In some ways it is difficult to compare Peter and O'Brien's actions to those of Sir Walter since they are of a lower class as well as in life and death situations. It might be easier to submit to capture when running away might mean death to an entire ship's crew than it is to think of not going to a party so that tenants won't have to pay such high taxes next year. It becomes very clear that there is a duty to be performed by Sir Walter and that he is lax in performing it when we look at Mr. Darcy of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Early in the novel Darcy is culpable for not performing his duty, the result of which is that Mr. Wickham is allowed to woo young Lydia, convincing her to run away with him. Fulford describes Darcy's position precisely:

Darcy and—as Austen suggests—the settled network of information and patronage controlled by the landed classes provide a reliable social order that, if used responsibly, is also a moral order. Darcy's fault hitherto has

been that he has inherited a position in that network but has not lived up to the responsibility that his position confers on him. He has not met the obligation... to use that power disinterestedly for the good. He has hoarded, but not used, the knowledge of Wickham that his position in the network provided him. (“Sighing” 171)

To this point Darcy is failing in the same way Sir Walter has failed. He uses his privilege for his own purposes, his own entertainment. We certainly don’t see the two men as equal. We hate Sir Walter more because he is more openly self interested, but Darcy’s fault causes the greater damage because it has been concealed. He is respectable and proper governance is expected of him. Sir Walter’s beginning and end is vanity, we expect nothing of him nor do any of the other characters than for him to simply remain Sir Walter. Darcy makes an important transformation, though it comes after he hears from Elizabeth what damage his neglect has done. As Fulford states, “By the end of the novel... [Darcy] does use this knowledge, and Austen looks to Darcy and his fellow landowner Bingley... for a model of social and national government. A landowning class reminded of its responsibilities by interrelationships with the middle classes” (“Sighing” 171). Darcy is reminded of his responsibilities, his duties, and he rises to the occasion and performs them. He finds Wickham, pays his debts inducing him to marry Lydia, and becomes a respectable, and loveable on the part of Elizabeth, not only because of his money and his possession, but because he is now using that money and possession for the betterment of those around him. He is not putting his life in danger in order to destroy a cannon and save a ship as are Peter and O’Brien, but he is putting his money at risk, using it to dig a poorer family out of disgrace and saving them from the negative influences of an unscrupulous man. He is sacrificing his personal pleasure in a way that Sir Walter

never would and is a much greater man, a better representation of masculinity, for it.

He may start out as a detestable character in the novel, but ultimately Darcy is our hero. He is the one to whom we look as readers, an act which is mirrored, or perhaps modeled, by Bingley in the text. It is his awakening to a sense of duty through his ardent, growing love for Elizabeth that makes his transformation possible. He becomes a better man and the first thing he finds he must do is to enact his duty as a member of the landed aristocracy privy to information that can make or break the dignity and honor of an entire family. It seems, then, that Fulford was echoing Austen when he listed an attentiveness to duty as being “above all” the other masculine traits.

Prior to this period it may have been the case that the most desirable men were the ones born with privilege, power, influence, and money. Moving through the Napoleonic wars, through the Regency period in England and pointing toward the Victorian Era, the qualities of masculinity seemed to take a big leap. The landed aristocracy, the men inheriting fortunes were beginning to be shown as Sir Walter Elliots and being represented by men like Peter Simple’s unscrupulous uncle. There were some who showed promise, Mr. Darcy / Mr. Bingley, but they were a different sort of aristocratic man. In many ways they represented the lower classes of men by being able to see and perform their duty toward their country at a time when most of the landed aristocracy couldn’t or wouldn’t and men from the lower classes could and did. More and more, though, the heroic men of the era were portrayed in the Captain Wentworths, Peter Simples, and the Clarence O’Briens to be found in the Royal Navy. They were men of some family background, they weren’t sailors before the mast, but neither were they the

highest born men in the country. They were active, duty minded, interested in making something of themselves rather than lying back on the realization that they were already something by birth. They weren't interested in how they looked physically, but how they acted. They were patriotic, self-reliant, courageous, paternal, and attentive to their duty. Anyone writing about this period would do well to include these traits in their characters. It makes perfect sense that we see these traits personified in Jack Aubrey, one of the main characters in Patrick O'Brian's novels.

CHAPTER FOUR

JACK AUBREY: MASCULINE QUALITIES IN O'BRIAN'S CHARACTER

Though it is set in the early 1800's, Patrick O'Brian's Master and Commander series was written at the end of the 20th century. The first book, *Master and Commander*, was published in 1970 and the last, *Blue at the Mizzen*, in 1999. In an interview O'Brian commented that "The sensation of falling into the past is not unlike that of coming home for the holidays from a new, strenuous, unpleasant school, and finding oneself back in wholly familiar surroundings with kind, gentle people and dogs – inconveniences of course, such as candlelight in one's bedroom (hard to read by) but nothing that one was not deeply used to" (Becker 123). This is a fitting response from someone who spent the majority of his time working on incredibly historically accurate representations of the early 19th century. It is generally easier to write what is known, i.e. the modern world in which one lives. In the case of O'Brian, it seems that what was known was the 19th century and what was strenuous and unpleasant was the present.

Perhaps one reason O'Brian chose to set his fiction in this particular period stems from the fact that he was an ardent admirer of Jane Austen. In listing his many influences he mentions the complete set of "Jane Austen which [he] very often consult[ed] and rarely put down in less than an hour" (Becker 115). Whatever the impetus, the fact remains that he wrote a great many books (more even than the twenty that make up the Master and Commander series) that take place in the early 19th century. Indeed, Master and Commander begins as young Lieutenant Jack Aubrey receives his orders of

promotion that compel him to take command of His Majesty's Sloop *Sophie*. The orders are dated 1st April 1800. The war with Bonaparte is in full swing and an officer in the Navy has but to be strong, courageous, and not a little lucky to make both his fortune and his name. We find early on that Jack Aubrey is all of those and a little bit more.

Physically Jack is a rather large man. He is described initially as a "man of between twenty and thirty whose big form overflowed his seat, leaving only a streak of gilt wood to be seen here and there" (O'Brian, *Master 7*). Though we never find out precisely what his height is, Jack is described as being tall. Likely this is in order to secure his status as a tall man in the mind of the reader who, given a relatively tall height for the period would consider it rather short as average heights have increased. Were we to discover, for instance, that Jack stood about 5' 6" we would not be able to think of him as a big man. Even if the average height for the time were 5' 1", which would make Jack tall but not freakishly huge, we would have a hard time, in an age where men are often 6' or taller, considering him anything but short. Then adding his girth we would have a very different impression of him than the one given by O'Brian. Instead of the short, fat man that might come across with an actual height, we are given a daunting figure in a tall, heavy man. We can then easily imagine him climbing up the various masts and sliding down because, in spite of his weight (which we are given) of 16 stone, we understand that he has lived a continual life at sea, always eating large meals, but never leaving off his physical activity. So we have a tall, heavy, active man who loves good music (he actually plays an incredibly fine violin), good wine and good food. Not to imply that he is all refinement and niceties, he is also a bull on an enemy's quarterdeck. We are also

frequently reminded of his sanguine temperament, his general good humor, and his willingness to please and be pleased. He is an amiable man, not too brilliant except in the matters of running a ship, navigating, maneuvering in battle, and commanding men. Later in the series he takes to mathematics and even writes a few papers concerning nautical navigation and astronomy. He is not stupid, but his intelligence is of a particular kind which is not shared by the other main character of the series, Stephen Maturin.

Stephen is, in almost every aspect, the antithesis of Jack. Physically he is shorter and thin. While Jack is generally to be understood as quite handsome, Stephen is rather not. In describing himself he begins by saying, “Admittedly, I am very far from being even tolerably good-looking” (O’Brian, *Blue* 121). He counters Jack also in intelligence. Early on it is Stephen who we understand to be the intellectual one. He is a trained physician, an ardent naturalist and an intelligence agent for England. A successful spy cannot be stupid. The two things they share are an ardent love of music, Stephen plays the cello, and an appreciation of good wine. They are often found together in the evening in the captain’s (Jack’s) cabin drinking fine wine and playing a violin-cello duet.

Such are the two primary players in this nautical narrative played out over so many pages and through so many adventures. Through this disparity between Jack and Stephen, it is clear that, in one sense, it is Jack who is the robust, red-blooded, English man. In every way he fits perfectly (especially in his imperfections) the epitome of what a masculine man ought to be in this period. According to the qualities outlined earlier, patriotism, self-reliance, courage, paternalism, and, above all, attentiveness to duty, taken from Fulford, and one which I will add, sexual prowess, Jack Aubrey is Consummately

Masculine. We must examine just how he demonstrates all of these masculine traits in order to later show the subtle contrast more starkly between Jack and Stephen and the implications to be gleaned from that contrast.

It is fitting that we should tackle patriotism first given its prominence in a man like Jack, wholly committed to the Navy. In many ways it might be said that patriotism is the same as attentiveness to duty. While the two certainly overlap, one would hardly be inclined to perform a duty to the crown without the motivation of patriotism. They are different in significant ways. Patriotism provides an impetus to perform a duty to the crown, but it goes beyond that. At least it should go beyond that impetus in the person of a Consummately Masculine man. Jack is the heart and soul of patriotism. He absolutely loves his country, ending every feast by drinking to the king. One effect of that affection is the fact that, like most of his countrymen, he is prejudiced against foreigners. Certainly one can be patriotic without being prejudiced, but a fervent love of country can at least be seen in a dislike of other countries.

This dislike of things not wholly British carries through to other aspects than simply disliking foreigners. The Church of England had been separated from the Roman Catholic church for approximately 300 years. Herein comes another of the great divides between the two main characters. Jack is, of course, a staunch supporter of the Anglican Church, though he states again and again he is nothing of a prude and doesn't assume to carry a great deal of moral superiority. He comments many times, in passing usually, about the negatives of Roman Catholicism while also condemning Irish as drunkards. As Stephen considers himself Roman Catholic and was born in Ireland, these comments

invariably leave Jack mortified that he has insulted his friend. They come, though, from a sense that the Irish and the Catholics are decidedly not British and, therefore, according to Jack's logic, are wrong where England is always right.

Many of the outward indications of Jack's patriotism come from the fact that they are tradition in the Navy. Drinking the king at the end of every large dinner, for instance, is something that everyone does in the Navy. It is clear, though, that it isn't done purely as a sense of duty to abide by the traditions of the Navy, but also because it is the desire of the hearts of those who participate, especially in Jack's case. It might be said that patriotism itself is a tradition in the Navy. The men take pride in the fact that they are a part of something much bigger than themselves. They are a part of, not just any Navy, but the King's Navy.

At one point Jack is at a dinner with many other officers and the supreme British Naval hero is brought up, Lord Horatio Nelson. Jack, recalling a time he had been present at a dinner with Nelson recounts:

he was telling us all how someone had offered him a boat-cloak on a cold night and he had said no, he was quite warm – his zeal for his King and country kept him warm. It sounds absurd, as I tell it, does it not? And was it another man, any other man, you would cry out 'oh, what pitiful stuff' and dismiss it as mere enthusiasm; but with him you feel your bosom glow. (O'Brian, *Master* 115-116)

As Lord Nelson is the man Jack and most other officers in the Navy admire most, this claim to fervent patriotism is significant. We are to understand that Nelson so loved his country and his king that he could keep warm on a cold night in the middle of a storm. Certainly most people can imagine a warm glow, a rush of emotion or a surge of

adrenaline at a festive celebration or in a fight defending one's country where love of King and country, patriotism, would indeed well up and create a sense of warmth. In such a removed circumstance, though, to be able to claim a sense of warm well being simply because of a love of country and king almost seems ridiculous. We must assume, if he can summon such emotion at such an unlikely time, that he must live with a continuous flow of adrenaline simply because he is British and is serving his great country. Jack's treatment of the claim, to dismiss it as "pitiful stuff" from anyone else but to believe it from Nelson shows both that he considers that particular man above and beyond the realm of normal men, and, since he aspires to be like his hero in every way, that he strives for such a love himself. It was not fashionable, in Jack's eyes, to deride his country for its faults. Rather he praises his country as the greatest on earth and, though he may never reach the pinnacle attained by Lord Nelson himself, yet presents an example of a solid British patriot.

In a structured organization like the Royal Navy, it may seem difficult to exemplify a self-reliant man. Indeed, to disobey orders carried the threat of death or, even worse to a patriotic naval officer, being dismissed the service. Yet self-reliance was a very important aspect of the Navy and a personal character trait of Jack Aubrey. In the early life of an officer there was very little opportunity to demonstrate self-reliance. There were opportunities though, such as Clarence O'Brien's desire to cure Peter Simple of his sea-sickness by thrashing the younger boy himself rather than bringing him to the ship's surgeon. Similarly, in writing the letter to his captain, Peter Simple was taking it upon himself to make sure that O'Brien's service was noticed when he might have left it

to someone else, or chance for that matter. There were ways in which young officers could show self-reliance, but they were subtle. Progressing through the ranks, self-reliance becomes more and more important. As a lieutenant, a man would begin to have more opportunities to command, whether it was a group of men boarding an enemy ship or taking control of the ship while the captain was away. A first lieutenant would be in charge of running the entire ship, second only to the captain himself who was often busy with paper work in his cabin. It is very easy to see the self-reliance required of a captain who, when out in the open ocean, was god himself to the entire crew. There was absolutely no authority above him in most situations.

This authoritative god-like figure is the position Jack is in for most of the series. He is the captain of a number of ships on which, the majority of the time, he is the sole authority. There are times when he is forced to submit to the orders of a superior officer, many of which are incredibly unjust as the Navy didn't necessarily run according to what was best for the service. As the admirals became involved, politics played a huge part of every decision, as did personal preference. For instance, when Jack undertakes to attack a ship of a much greater force than his own and carries it away, bringing it in to Mahon harbor, he is a hero. The *Cacafuego* had been sent out specifically to destroy Jack Aubrey and his ship the *Sophie*. With his exceptional success in battle he finds that he is successful in other areas as well, such as seducing the wife of his immediate superior, Captain Harte. This, plus the fact that there were complications arising from the death of a young member of the crew to whose parents Harte owed a great deal of money, combine to create a great deal of enmity between Jack and his superior officer.

Ordinarily the needs of Jack's ship, which would have to include a great deal of repairs after such a battle, would have been met with some kind of alacrity. After all the ship was officially the king's property and should be taken care of. However, because of the enmity created by Jack's lack of good conduct, Captain Harte is inclined to be as unhelpful and as spiteful as he can officially be. Harte is using his authority to punish Jack and is perfectly capable of doing so as he is left, as the commanding officer of Port Mahon, to rely on his own judgment. Here is self-reliance without a commanding sense of duty or patriotism.

Each step up in the chain of command brings another level of power and influence. Necessarily each step in the chain of command also requires a greater sense of self-reliance. Ultimately the Admiral of the Fleet still answered to the King. With the system of communication that was present, there were admirals in each port who acted, essentially, on their own. Captain Harte was subject to his superior officers as well, but he was able to use his influence to make Jack's life fairly miserable. Jack had little choice but to accept the situation, but in small ways he was able to assert his own self-reliance. They were small ways, but infinitely larger than the ways in which a midshipman might assert his self-reliance. Jack did capture, along with many others, the *Cacafuego* and he did sleep with Molly Harte. Because the *Cacafuego* was not condemned as a lawful prize, both instances were unofficial, but were known among the general populace nonetheless. Official or not, the capture of a vessel of superior strength is a boon to one's character. While sleeping with Molly Harte is less obviously a positive event, it does show Jack's ability to rely upon himself, to pursue his own desires,

regardless of social norms or potential drawbacks –such as Captain Harte discovering Jack’s part in his wife’s infidelity.

Molly Harte is made out to be a vicious flirt whose distaste for her own husband drives her to not a little immodesty. When we are first truly introduced to Molly Harte she is entertaining two officers, a lieutenant and a midshipman. O’Brian makes the comment that, “at Port Mahon it was very much the thing to pay a morning call on Mrs. Harte” (*Master* 20). We can understand Jack having a close relationship with Mrs. Harte as they have known each other since they were children and have always had a close relationship, but the other two officers and the fact that, apparently, many more are familiar with her, is a gross impropriety. Beyond simple social impropriety, Jack does sleep with Molly. No matter how close they were as children, there is no way of getting around that this is immoral. Jack knows that it is his success with the *Cacafuego* that allows him to “court” the lovely, much desired Mrs. Harte. He has his time in the sun, so to speak and is eventually required to leave Port Mahon. Back at sea, Jack finds it necessary to seek the services of his personal friend and ship’s physician. He doesn’t have any idea what is wrong, though Stephen is easily able to identify the “pox,” which usually referred to syphilis (King 349). Jack contracting syphilis from Molly Harte demonstrates that he was not the only successful officer to have “cuckolded” the spiteful Captain Harte. It also demonstrates that, in light of submitting to the tyrannical authority of Captain Harte, many officers found it diverting to usurp that authority in an unsanctioned expression of their own self-reliance.

In many ways courage is similar to self-reliance, as patriotism is similar to

attentiveness to duty. To be truly self-reliant one must be courageous, though courage can take many other forms. When Jack jumps onto the deck of the *Cacafuego*, he is certainly courageous. Even in attempting to fight the other ship—which is significantly larger in the number of guns, the size of those guns, the number of crew, and just the sheer bulk of the ship—is ludicrous. It is so much bigger, in fact, that Jack is able to sail right up next to the *Cacafuego* and does not present himself as a target because the *Sophie* is small enough that the *Cacafuego*'s guns can't be pointed down far enough to be effective. He shows courage in those instances, but he is also showing self-reliance. When he is cornered by the *Cacafuego*, he could give up, but he couldn't look to a superior officer to help him out of the predicament he is in. He has to look to himself. So we will examine both courage displayed in battle and that which is displayed in a more obscure manner, such as courage required to report to an unsavory superior officer as happens when Jack meets Captain Harte after the *Cacafuego* incident. This second type of courage can also be called fortitude.

There are many examples available to demonstrate Jack Aubrey's courage under fire. Near the end of the series his person has been so disfigured, from the many wounds he sustains and generally ignores until the end of the fight, as to make him an imposing sight. Perhaps the most compelling evidence, though, of his true courage comes near the end of the first book. He has had the *Sophie* for some time and has used the sloop successfully time and time again to capture enemy ships and destroy French forts. Finally, Captain Christy-Pallièrre of the *Desaix*, a true French ship of the line with seventy-four guns along with the *Indomptable* of eighty guns, bear down on the *Sophie*.

Jack has no option but to try to outrun his enemy which he attempts with all of his wit and skill. For a moment it seems as though he may have done it, gotten away clean, until the *Desaix* turns to follow and inexorably draws closer. Jack has no options, no way to make the ship sail any faster, no possible way to defend himself or his ship. He resigns himself to the terrible fact that he will be taken or sunk and proceeds accordingly and calmly. Right to the very last moment, until his sails are utterly destroyed he continues to run, to try and escape. When there is no possible means of getting free, he strikes his colors, surrendering.

It may not seem courageous to run away or to surrender but it was the way in which Jack did both that demonstrates his courage. When he first realized the force of the ships against him he tried to run and they were gaining on him. A fourteen gun sloop is no match for either of the ships against him and couldn't sail fast enough to get away. It would have made good sense to surrender immediately. However, Jack doesn't do that. When the *Sophie* isn't pulling away, he decides to lighten the load by throwing everything overboard: the water, the food, the cannons, the ammunition, everything. When that doesn't work Jack still doesn't give up. He devises a plan to turn suddenly and run between the two ships giving him a head start as they won't be able to turn as fast as he can in a little sloop, especially since she has been lightened. When the *Desaix* follows, more quickly than Jack had hoped, she comes to a speed greater than what the *Sophie* is capable of without even spreading all of her sails. There is again no possible way Jack can escape. He gained about a mile of distance by turning about which is quickly eaten away by the much faster *Desaix*; yet he doesn't surrender. He continues to sail as far and

as fast as he can. Finally, when the *Desaix* yaws to bring her cannons to bear loaded with grape (hundreds of small iron balls), she completely and utterly destroys the sails and rigging of the *Sophie*. At this point there is no way to escape, and there are only minutes, perhaps seconds before the cannons fire again and kill the crew and / or sink the ship. This is the point that Jack surrenders, when there is no way to even try to escape, nothing for him to do, however fruitless it might have been, and the death of his crew is imminent. He doesn't stubbornly hold on and, essentially, commit suicide and homicide (in the case of his men). He allows the French to take his sloop, but they get precious little else. He acts honorably, but not arrogantly. He is wise enough to flee certain death, courageous enough to try every possible means of escape, however seemingly pointless, and has the fortitude to make the horrible decision to surrender when all other options are gone.

After Jack brings the *Cacafuego* into harbor, when he has written his official letter and brings it to Captain Harte, his reception is rather cold. Jack was well aware that this would be the case, yet Harte's office is his first stop. He hasn't been officially on shore yet, hasn't been able to enjoy the good wishes and the excitement of those around him. It might have been easier to wait until later in the day when more people would be bustling about so that he at least could have made his way leisurely up to Captain Harte's office while basking in the glow of his success, but he doesn't. He knows that his official report is important and should be the first of his letters to be delivered and so he goes first thing in the morning while there aren't many people about. He doesn't shrink from what promises to be a difficult interview. He even makes it through most of the verbal

drubbing he receives without the loss of his temper. As O'Brian states, "it was so evidently [Harte's] intention to be ill-natured that his words had little effect" (*Master* 339). He knows what is of the first importance and has the fortitude, the courage, to do it.

The captain of a ship is god incarnate in the microcosmic society of a Man of War. There are many aspects of a god figure, one of which is paternalism. The great and powerful man, in control of every living creature aboard his ship, serves the function of a father figure to his crew. He is the male authority figure to which all others submit. Without spending a great deal of time deliberating what it means to be paternal, generally we can say that it is a sense in which the authority figure is male and cares deeply for those under his command and wants what is best for them. Jack, a man we have seen so far as a Consummately Masculine man, submits to Captain Harte simply because he must. But Captain Harte is in no way paternal because he doesn't care what happens to Jack and he certainly doesn't want what is best for him. When Jack is first given the command of the *Sophie*, he makes his way to Harte's office where it is remarked, "whether [Harte] disliked Jack because Jack was tall and he was short, or whether he suspected him of carrying on an intrigue with his wife, it was all one – there was a strong antipathy between them, and it was of long standing" (O'Brian, *Master* 18). It is not altogether irregular that a superior officer would dislike a subordinate, but the evidence of Harte's fault comes in the fact that he uses every ounce of his influence against Jack's interests. In this scene, the result of the interview is that Jack is informed of the lack of prime hands to be had since the sailing of another ship, the *Pallas* which has taken all or most of them. We are given to understand that Harte schemed and planned, knowing Jack would be

busy the evening he sent his orders to take command of the *Sophie* and, in the intervening time, made sure the *Pallas* was gone. In short, Harte used his authority and influence to deprive Jack and his ship of the necessary hands. If he had been truly paternal and had been looking out for Jack's best interests, he would have done precisely the opposite.

Jack, on the other hand, demonstrates his paternal qualities in another situation that has some similarities to the interview with Harte. As a captain, Jack loves regularity and the traditions of the service and he goes to considerable lengths to make sure everything is right and regular. In general, though, he would be thought to be an easy going captain as opposed to a "right tartar" who might rig a grating and flog crew members every day. On Jack's ships flogging very rarely occurs. However, there are a couple of things he simply will not allow, one of which is women on board a ship. While some captains bring their wives or mistresses, Jack will not have it. When it becomes apparent that one of his midshipmen has smuggled a young woman aboard Jack's response is, "Everyone knows how I hate a woman aboard. They are worse than cats or parsons for bad luck. But quite apart from that, quite rationally, no good ever came of women aboard – perpetual trouble..."(O'Brian, *Truelove* 33). Though he has only glimpsed the young woman, Clarissa, for a moment and hasn't sailed with the midshipman, Mr. Oaks, for more than a few weeks Jack still sees fit to say, "She is an odious wench, and he is an ungrateful scrub." He doesn't know either of them, but judges them very quickly based on their behavior in light of his standing hatred of women on board. It is interesting to note that, as a midshipman himself, Jack was turned before the mast (he had his officer status taken from him and worked aboard ship as an ordinary

seaman) on the same ship in which he is now captain for hiding a woman in the very same place Mr. Oaks has stowed young Clarissa.

Jack's initial plan is to maroon both of the offenders, Mr. Oaks and his young lady, on the nearest island and never see them again. He takes steps to do just that, and seems to change his mind at the last minute. Truly, once he calmed down from the initial surprise, he was fairly forgiving, partially due to the fact that Clarissa was not an "odious wench" but rather a seemingly well bred young lady. Ultimately, Jack not only allows them to remain on the ship, but he helps them to arrange to be married so that Clarissa might not be taken back to the penal colony from which she had been rescued. He even goes further than that. At discovering that the only clothes she had available to her were the cast off's from a long deceased midshipman, Jack calls for a bolt of silk he himself had purchased as a gift to his wife and gives Clarissa enough that a suitable wedding dress can be made. Here is the antithesis to the actions and attitudes taken by Harte. Where Harte receives injury and repays tenfold using his authority and influence to his own ends, Jack receives injury, indeed betrayal, and repays it with forgiveness, favor and a costly gift. Continuing the story further, Jack makes sure that Oaks is given his opportunity to advance beyond the status of a midshipman to become a lieutenant. That way, when they disembark at the nearest major port (for he still will not have a woman aboard), the young married couple will at least have Oaks' half pay (which he wouldn't have been able to draw as a midshipman) until he is able to get another ship.

An interesting aspect of the incredible paternalism shown here is that it not only extended to young Mr. Oaks who was truly and concretely under Jack's authority.

Clarissa was smuggled aboard and, as such, she fell under the authority of the ship's captain. Jack would have been very generous to Mr. Oaks by allowing him to marry Clarissa, stay aboard until the nearest major port, and letting the two of them have a relatively private berth. He didn't have to provide the young lady with anything beyond food in order to maintain his officer's best interests. Jack went beyond this and cared for Clarissa specifically, though. He didn't want any women aboard and didn't have to recognize her as an actual member of the ship. He could have, officially, ignored her presence, but he didn't. When presented with the impossible situation where the only option was to take her under his authority, he acted on her behalf and did several very generous things which were for her benefit alone. We find out later that Clarissa has had a very non-traditional past, part of which included living and working in a brothel. She would likely have been very comfortable wearing men's clothing, but she enjoyed even more having a proper set of dresses to wear. She didn't prefer cross dressing, when given a choice, and Jack provided for her at great personal expense because he wanted the best for her as a paternal authority figure.

As is implied in the quote from Fulford, attentiveness to duty is above all and foremost in any consideration of a man from this period. It certainly pertains to men in the Navy. The categories of masculinity here explored are all connected. Without patriotism, attentiveness to duty has no meaning; duty to what if not to King and Country? Self Reliance and courage are closely related and both of them are necessary in being able to perform duty, especially when performing that duty is not a pleasurable task. paternalism can be seen as a certain type of duty, a captain's duty to his men as distinct

from his duty to King and Country. It may make sense, then, that duty is labeled as the most important since it encompasses all the others. Additionally, at a time when revolutionary ideals are in the air and invasion is a very real threat, everyone had to do their duty in order to fend off the enemies of the state, both physical and ideological. Jack Aubrey is nothing if not attentive to his duty. This means that he will do what is assigned, not necessarily because no one else will do it, certainly not because it is something that he wants to do, not because it is of the first importance that the thing get done, but because it is his task. Early in *Pride and Prejudice* Mr. Darcy vilified himself for not crying out against Wickham when to do so would have saved immense trouble for the Bennets. Elizabeth might have let his character be known, so might Jane. There were others who could have accomplished the feat. But as a member of the landed aristocracy who was privy to information that could have protected people underneath him, it was Darcy's duty to use it. Had he informed on Wickham, Lydia would have remained at home. As such, he took it as his duty to rectify the matter.

As the Navy is his life, Jack's sense of duty is perfectly intact. Mr. Oaks riles him immeasurably by bringing a woman aboard his ship, but he does eventually get over his anger. He remits his position and is ready to allow the two to marry. Yet, with a sense of duty in mind, he still goes through the motions of trying to run them ashore. He sends his coxswain, Bonden, to see if a landing would be possible through the surf of a particularly remote island. While there is a perfectly calm channel in which they could have landed, Bonden returns with a report that the island is unreachable. There is an understanding between the two that this is the correct answer as no one wants to actually maroon the two

young people. Yet it is necessary to go through the motions of putting them ashore so that duty to the codes of conduct necessary on a ship is upheld.

Similarly, when Jack is running from the *Desaix* in his ship-rigged sloop the *Sophie*, it is his duty to do everything in his power to evade the superior force and save his ship. Certainly he is courageous in performing this duty, but there would be no sense of courage to demonstrate if it were not his duty in the first place. If it were merely up to the discretion of each commander to decide what they wanted to do for their ship without any influence from or duty to a superior, Jack might well have decided that his crew was tired and that the best thing to do would be to surrender directly. It would have meant a much easier time for himself and less strain and heartache for his men. In surrendering Jack was treated very civilly. Indeed, he made a good friend in Captain Pallière. Without a sense of duty to the Admiralty and the general necessity to always act for the good of the service, Jack's actions might have seemed unduly risky. As it was, the French did take a sloop which would then be put to use against the British, but they didn't benefit from any of the stores, guns, powder, rigging, etc. which were all thrown overboard in an effort to reduce weight and increase speed or destroyed by the French themselves. The only way the French could have benefitted less would have been for the sloop to sink. That would have meant death for most, if not all, of his crew as the vast majority of them couldn't swim. As it was Jack perfectly performed his duty in running from and depriving the French of as much as he could, and demonstrated his courage through the performance of that duty in the face of adversity.

The weight of a captain's (or commander's) duty is aptly expressed in the ending

of Jack's commission from the Admiralty. "Hereof nor you nor any of you may fail as you will answer the contrary at your Peril" (O'Brian, *Master* 13). This is a threat which is not empty. Upon his return to England, Jack must sit through a court marshal to examine the way in which the sloop was lost. Ultimately he is acquitted, but the severity of failure, regardless of circumstances, is imprinted. It is important to distinguish between adhering to orders out of fear as opposed to performing assigned tasks through a sense of duty. At the forefront of Jack's mind throughout the ordeal with the *Desaix* is not his potential impending court marshal. His fear does not drive him. Certainly after the fact Jack cannot help but think of the necessity of and therefore dread an official inquiry, but it is only an afterthought. In the situation it is his sense of duty that drives him.

An interesting point at which O'Brian deviates from the standard in nineteenth century writing comes with characters like Molly Harte and the way in which Jack Aubrey pursues and attains both her favor and her honor. Writers in the nineteenth century treated this subject matter quite differently. Charles Dickens' treatment of the issue of prostitution in *Oliver Twist* is a great example. Wolff, in quoting Dickens' preface to the 1841 edition of the novel, shows both that the female criminal, Nancy, was a prostitute and that he specifically left it up to the reader's inference to figure that out. It is not surprising to know that she is a prostitute, keeping the background of the period in mind, but it is surprising to see it stated outright. Dickens states, "I endeavored... to banish from the lips of the lowest character I introduced, any expression that could by possibility offend; and rather to lead to the unavoidable inference that its existence was of the most debased and vicious kind, than to prove it elaborately by words and deeds" (qtd.

in Wolff 227-228). Similarly, when we are introduced to the fact that Count Fosco and Mr. Hartwell's Italian friend are members of a very secret and very violent society, we are never told the extent to which we should fear them or what they do. We are made to understand that they are to be feared and we do see Fosco's body in the end to indicate that someone from that society took the ultimate revenge, but we never see the act in progress. We are never even actually told that Fosco was killed by this society, though we are given enough proof for us to easily infer who killed him and why.

Dickens' scrupulous lack of detail is nowhere to be found in O'Brian's writing. We may be able to believe of Mr. Darcy or Mr. Bingley that they have not saved themselves for marriage. We might even be able to see Captain Wentworth out on some remote station with some less than honorable young woman whom he never plans to marry. But those topics will never be mentioned in polite society or in the novels in which these characters appear. Even a character whose morals are much more loose, such as Tom Bertram, doesn't actually give evidence of what loose things he has been about. We know that he has accrued large debts and gambling is mentioned, but when we consider the incredible abundance of prostitutes as described by Wolff, it would be hard to believe that he had never once indulged. Additionally, when we consider what was going on amongst the aristocracy with Fulford's description of the scandal involving the Duke of York and the general conduct of the standing militia, Jack's actions don't seem so out of place. We must remember that, though his family has dwindled and he is not wealthy, he is of some family and he will eventually inherit his father's estate. He is part of the landed aristocracy, though certainly not to the level of Mr. Darcy or even Mr.

Bingly. While the liaison between Jack and Mrs. Harte may not be out of the range of possibilities to have actually happened in this period, we would never have read about it in a novel from the nineteenth century. Though O'Brian is taking some license with his form, he is not being historically inaccurate.

The interesting question that this issue begs is that of what impact this has on the representation of a Consummate Masculinity. Sexual prowess is not a part of the masculinity to be found in the literature of the nineteenth century. Fulford doesn't mention sexual prowess as a masculine trait, as well he shouldn't, primarily because most of the writers in the nineteenth century don't mention it either. Although, just by the presence in London of so many prostitutes that it was found to be "positively infested by... offenders" (qtd. in Wolff 237), we can see that, since there was a great supply of sex for hire, there had to have been an incredible demand. Yet the ideal, as represented in Dickens, Austen, Marryat, and others was to strive for sexual purity, and the base men, let alone the virtuous, are never mentioned engaging in the thriving industry of prostitution or even in simple adultery.

It is logical that sexual prowess didn't enter Fulford's list of masculine qualities. In reading O'Brian's novels, sexuality does enter the story to some extent, so it must enter our discussion. The men aboard ship are sexual creatures in several significant ways. First and foremost, every time the ship leaves port Stephen's job as a physician is complicated by an incredible influx of pox (venereal diseases, generally syphilis). The prostitutes had excellent customers when the men came into port from an extended period at sea with a little money in their pockets. This usually remained an attribute of the

foremast jacks, the seamen. The officers were generally too refined to spend much time in the brothels. There certainly are times when a warrant officer will come down with the normal malady, but the gentlemen officers, the lieutenants, captains, and midshipmen (to a degree) are more often above that sort of thing. They are social climbers, generally, in order to put themselves in the way of promotion as well. In port they were more likely to attend dinners or balls than to fritter their time in lower company and in that higher society, the opportunities for liaison were much fewer. There are some notable exceptions.

One glaring exception is Jack's relationship with Mrs. Molly Harte. They are indiscreet to begin with, spending time together and being more intimate than perhaps they should. Later, after Jack's success with the *Cacafuego*, they consummate their liaison, repeatedly. Jack's take on the matter is very interesting. He notes:

she *was* something of a whore... looking at her with great approval as she stood there with her head high, perfectly aware of what the women were saying, and defying them: she was something of a whore, but the knowledge spurred his appetite. She was only for the successful; but with the *Cacafuego* moored by the *Sophie* in Mahon harbour, Jack found that perfectly acceptable. (O'Brian, *Master* 347 emphasis in original)

This shocking revelation is furthered later by Jack's own case of the pox when they next put to sea. Not only is she "something of a whore" she even carries the consequences of the most base brothel. She is not bought with money though; her price is success which Jack finds "perfectly acceptable." Unlike visiting a brothel, this liaison is very public. Molly is the wife of the commanding officer in that port, frequently entertains and is generally the envy of the town. She can hold her head high despite what

the women are saying because she knows they can't touch her status. They may say what they will, but she will continue to hold balls and people will continue to attend because her status is solid. The case is not the same with Jack. He has been given a command, but has not been posted. His promotions are still tenuous at best. While Molly requires a solid social standing to be able to flout tradition and modesty, Jack actually benefits from the connection. Certainly he doesn't improve his standing with Captain Harte, but he doesn't completely destroy it either which we see when Jack brings his official letter regarding the capture of the *Cacafuego*. Harte darts him a furious look which gives Jack the impression that he resents a financial set-back more than the debauching of his wife. Meanwhile, the news has spread all over town, indeed it need not spread very far since it was openly displayed, that Jack had, in some sense, won the privilege of Molly Harte's bed. This meant something significant since the price for that honor was success. Molly was as much a mark of Jack's success as the epaulet on his shoulder was a mark of his promotion.

During the extent of his relationship with Molly Harte, Jack was otherwise single. She might have been cheating on her husband, but Jack was not so publicly dishonoring a wife at home. Even if Jack had been married, though, it wouldn't have been as disgraceful for him to be adulterous as it is for Molly. The standards are different. Women are to be pure while men are virile. The very combination speaks for the implied need of men to seek out less pure women to satisfy their excessive virility. Generally that meant prostitution which, as we have seen, was rampant during the period. Sometimes, however, a lucky man might find a woman placed high enough in society who was

dissatisfied enough with her husband that she would neither care what other people said nor what her husband thought of her. In this case it seems as though masculinity, in responding to the requisite purity of femininity, is given license to be dishonorable by acting in a way that, at the very least, may grieve an otherwise dearly loved wife. As masculinity progresses beyond the Consummate Masculinity of Jack Aubrey, this is one of the things we see changing, an issue I discuss further in the next chapter.

Jack does get married later to a young woman named Sophie, after which a liaison like the one with Molly would be indiscreet and more damaging to his reputation, not to mention the fact that he would feel terrible about being unfaithful to the wife he truly loves. It is intriguing then when Jack is half a world away in the Pacific Ocean helping a particular tribe overcome their rivals who have been supported by the French and in so doing gains the admiration of the queen (whose husband had died). He does not object when she joins him in his bed, nor does he feel anything but elation afterward. Again, status is an issue. He wouldn't necessarily have had just any young islander, but the queen was an appropriate match for a captain in the Navy. Had he slept with just any girl, the impact it would have had on the crew would have been negative. It would have, in some way, lowered him to their level. He would have been doing exactly the same thing that they were all doing with exactly the same women, almost as if he had gone with them to a brothel back home. Sleeping with the queen, however, he retained his status in their eyes in that, none of them could have achieved such an honor.

Though he wouldn't do such a thing at home, it is perfectly permissible in a foreign port. As Fulford demonstrates, this was not an uncommon occurrence among

British men in the colonies. He notes, “the colonial official Philip Francis confessed to living with ‘Black ladies without end’; his compatriot Innes Munro declared it easier to keep ‘a whole zenana of Indians than the extravagance of one English lady,’ and even Sir John Shore, governor-general of India and later a member of the Clapham Sect, kept a small harem” (“Romanticizing” 169). In light of the scandal involving the Duke of York and the state of the militia, this was not promising news. Not only were the aristocracy morally deficient at home, but colonial officials were bringing worse practices home with them. Jack falls into this category of men who have been criticized by writers in the period. Here is his great weakness.

One could argue that Jack’s sexual prowess with prominent women is a boon to his masculinity and that it does increase his standing in the eyes of men who are sexually immoral themselves. But his unfaithfulness to his wife cannot be placed in the context of the nineteenth century, when the aristocracy’s immorality so distressed the nation, without counting it as a detriment. We must remember that, though not abundantly wealthy, at least not until he becomes so through prize money, Jack is a member of the landed aristocracy. In addition we must consider the ideal expressed by Stephen to have “never yet known a man admit that he was either rich or asleep” (O’Brian, *Master* 177). In Jack’s own consideration he might consider himself wealthy and of some little influence by the end of the series, but the story would be very different if told by a member of the lower class. At the end his is a Rear Admiral of the Blue, holds a seat in parliament with a vote, he is a local magistrate on the land inherited at his father’s death, he is a member of Black’s (an elitist homo-social club in London), and he is a well

respected member of the Royal Society having delivered papers relating to mathematics and navigation. He may not have a peerage or a “Sir” in front of his name, but Jack is definitely a powerful, influential man involved in both the protection and the governance of the nation. The fact that he is morally compromised sexually is less of a boon and more of a detriment. Sure he doesn’t keep a mistress and promote officers based on their contributions to her, but he is at least in the same category as men like the Duke of York, Innes Munro, Sir John Shore, and Philip Francis who distressed the nation with their immoral sexual prowess.

By every reckoning present in early nineteenth century fiction Jack Aubrey is a perfect representation of a masculine man. He is patriotic, self-reliant, courageous, paternal, and, above all, attentive to his duty. While his sexual immorality degrades his image as a masculine man, that degradation assures that he won’t be put upon a pedestal. Here is not another Lord Horatio Nelson to be revered. This is a human being with foibles, imperfections, tempers and vices. Yes he has cheated on his wife without remorse, but it is more a function of an improper classification of foreigners than a blatant disregard for Sophie’s honor. He does love his wife. He simply feels justified in seeking sexual fulfillment elsewhere when she is not physically with him. Again, it is not a trait to his credit, but it neither is it, in the values of the nineteenth century, such a very terrible thing. Even when Sophie is not with him, he is at least thinking about her daily and composes a perpetual letter to her and is overjoyed at receiving news from home. At one point, after having been gone for several months, Jack is very emotional in response to first reading her letter. He must say, “Forgive me, Stephen: I do beg pardon for this

disgraceful exhibition: but Sophie's letter quite bowled me over... Lord it quite unmanned me. Strutting about on the other side of the world, leaving everything to them... I had no idea how attached I was" (O'Brian, *Blue* 204). He cares so deeply for his wife and family that he is "unmanned" through his emotional response. He wants to be there at home. His immorality is not a callousness, but literally a weakness. Through this weakness he is more appealing. Being a normal, ordinary man it is all the more remarkable that he should have the collection of masculine qualities already discussed. He is not the unreachable epitome of a masculine man, he is the everyday, ordinary man, who (we see from Jack's example) is capable of achieving an extraordinary, Consummate Masculinity.

With a main character like Jack Aubrey it may seem that O'Brian has gauged the values of the period and is simply presenting an ideal representation of a man from the period in order to give an accurate representation. It is very interesting to note, however, that his other main character, Stephen Maturin, deviates from the Jack's Consummate Masculinity.

CHAPTER FIVE

STEPHEN MATURIN: A COUNTER MASCULINITY

After a relatively thorough examination of Jack Aubrey as an example of a masculine man from the early nineteenth century we take a quicker look at Stephen Maturin and show how he is not meeting those categories of Consummate Masculinity. A physical description of Stephen is, in almost every way, the precise opposite of Jack. Often, when Stephen is enraged he is described as reptilian –cold blooded. Continuing this metaphor, as a medical man, Stephen necessarily performs particularly violent procedures on his patients always, in Jack’s eyes, in cold blood. When Jack is present for these he nearly loses control of himself and faints. It is an interesting quandary that a man such as Jack could easily lop off a leg, arm, or even a head without taking much notice of it or the blood that results, but cannot stomach an orderly amputation. In the heat of battle, nothing bothers a man like Jack, but the cold, calculated way in which Stephen goes about any of his medical procedures disturbs him. Stephen generally dislikes a heated battle though, as an expert marksman and sword-fighter, he does take part in particularly desperate struggles. As a medical man, though, his place is generally below decks during a fight where he is completely taken up with trying to save men’s lives. Where Jack is given to drinking much wine, Stephen drinks in moderation. He is very rarely, if ever, drunk. However, he experiments with myriad other drugs, some of them quite heavily. The two arenas in which Jack and Stephen overlap, where they share a common bond, are coffee and music. They are both devoted coffee drinkers and they

share a deep devotion to good music. The similarities and differences between the two men are varied and nuanced. Evaluating Stephen in terms of Consummate Masculinity helps us to see *how* he is different from Jack, but more importantly that, despite (or perhaps because of), that difference Stephen is still masculine. While he does display some of the characteristics of Consummate Masculinity, he does so markedly different from the way in which we see them in Jack. Masculinity begins to mean something different as we are forced to respect both Stephen and the form of masculinity he represents. That he even has a choice implies the changing characteristics, perhaps the erosion, of Consummate Masculinity.

While it was essential that Jack, as a ship's captain, maintain an intense fervor for King and Country in order to instill the same desire in his men, Stephen is not required to share those sentiments. Certainly he cannot, and is not, against King George. Indeed, as an intelligence agent, he serves England in ways that Jack never could. In fact, many of Jack's written orders specifically refer to Stephen Maturin as one whom Jack should consult in the completion of his duties. In their initial commission together aboard the *Sophie*, Stephen is instrumental in acquiring knowledge of the *Cacafuego*, the ship sent specifically to eliminate the *Sophie*, before they encounter the frigate. Jack is then able to run from the first interaction by disguising his sloop as a Dutch vessel and choose the time and place he would like to take on the superior Spanish force. Ultimately, Jack is successful in taking the *Cacafuego*, a feat he would have failed in had not Stephen provided appropriate warning. Their means of serving England are different, but they do both serve England.

The reason that Stephen doesn't fully demonstrate patriotism in his service comes from the motivation through which he serves. He is not English. His parentage is somewhat obscure as he is a self-proclaimed bastard. He is Irish and he grew up primarily in Spanish Catalonia. The combination of the two cultural influences of countries ruled by other nations have created a deep-seated longing for freedom. His past is clouded by his involvement with a failed Irish uprising. Certainly this complicates his service in the Royal Navy of a country he had previously fought against. His rationale comes from his utter and complete hatred of Napoleon and what he stands for. He is willing to assist King George in acquiring new protectorates as long as the only other option for the island in question is to fall under the influence of France. Jack proposes that they defend Moahu from a particular Frenchman who would like to completely disrupt the system of government on the island in place of a utopian scheme. In response, Stephen reminds Jack:

I am in favour of leaving people alone, however imperfect their polity may seem. It appears to me that you must not tell other nations how to set their house in order; nor must you compel them to be happy. But I too am a naval officer, brother; long, long ago you taught me to choose the lesser of two [evils]. On that basis alone I may be said to have no objection to Moahu's becoming a nominal British possession. (O'Brian, *Truelove* 148)

It is important that he agrees to Moahu becoming a "nominal" British possession. He understands that England is not going to set up their own system of government and attempt to run the lives of the people living on this remote island. Rather, Jack and his men will defend the queen from invasion by her rival (supported by Dutourd), receive her promise of submission and then sail away, likely never to return. By becoming a British possession, then, the island will remain functionally free. At the same time, they will

have rid the place of one of the warring factions and so also brought peace. As an intelligence agent Stephen has learned to accept the end result and not worry so much about the way in which it was achieved. He is happy to see the islanders functionally free when he understands that, in this situation, there is no option for them to remain nominally free. They will have to fall to either France or England and he decides that England will leave them most free and therefore is the lesser of the two evils. For a true British patriot, freedom does not ever enter consideration. England serves her king and seeks to expand her empire to include more territories for the good of the crown and the civilizing effect it will have on the poor, unfortunate creatures who have the particular disgrace of having not been born in England. Stephen cares little for any country, just that people everywhere should be free to govern themselves.

While he does demonstrate self-reliance, the way in which Stephen does so is very different from Jack. Jack demonstrated self-reliance in the way he governed his men aboard ship and the way in which he carried out orders. As an illegitimate child, Stephen has had fewer advantages in his life than Jack. Certainly he was afforded the opportunity to become educated and eventually he inherits a vast fortune from his god-father, yet for the greater part of his life he has had no significant role model, no mentor to look up to. Jack, growing up aboard ship, had any number of significant men to influence him and help him become the man he eventually is. His reverence of Lord Nelson is a great example of how he continues through adulthood to look up to significant men above him and model himself after their great example. Stephen never does this. He relies on himself, and takes care of himself to a degree that he has very little trust in anyone or

anything beyond himself. In a sense it is an extension of his love of freedom. He is not under the authority of anyone at the beginning of the series. When he first meets Jack he is offered a position aboard the *Sophie* as ship's surgeon and is immediately interested. It means he will have to begin depending on someone else and likely would not accept such a subjugation were he not in such dire financial straits. In response to Jack's offer to become his ship's surgeon, made in a sort of bantering manner not expected to be taken seriously, Stephen tells Jack, "It is always said to be weak, and impolitic, to show oneself at a disadvantage... but you speak with such candour that I cannot prevent myself from doing the same. Your offer, your suggestion, tempts me exceedingly; for... I am very much at a stand, here in Minorca... when I told you some time ago, that I had not eaten so well for a great while, I did not speak figuratively" (O'Brian, *Master* 41-42). Stephen's existence in Minorca is reminiscent of the educated narrator of Knut Hamsun's *Hunger*, wandering the streets of Christiania wanting to continue to appear respectable while the inevitable gnawing of hunger slowly eats away his humanity. Though Hamsun's narrator is a writer and Stephen is a doctor, they are both left with no employment. Were we to obtain a narrative of Stephen's time in Minorca, after his one patient had passed away and before he met Jack, it might sound very similar to Hamsun's narrator as he proclaims, "If only one had something to eat, just a little, on such a clear day!" (Hamsun 7). After dining with Jack, Stephen demonstrates his lack of sustenance by stuffing some leftover meat into his pocket for the next day. Like Hamsun's character, Stephen's solution is to join a ship.

Stephen's place on the *Sophie*, as ship's surgeon, allows him to continue his

unique sort of self-reliance. He is not required to take any oaths, pass any examinations or receive a commission. He is given a warrant and functions much like an independent contractor with the Navy. He provides a service aboard a ship but is not subject to the same discipline as the rest of the crew. He cannot, for instance, be brought up and flogged for disobedience. He would have to be brought to port and there answer to the Sick and Hurt Board and be appropriately dealt with. As a surgeon, he is subject to Jack's authority, but as an intelligence agent, he has some influence over the decisions made.

Later, after he inherits his fortunes, Stephen becomes completely independent of any authority. He buys a ship which he then allows Jack to captain and remains the surgeon himself, but the dynamics are obviously changed. Where Jack's self-reliance comes out as a sort of courageous, self actualizing, assertiveness, Stephen's self-reliance is more a sort of response to a complete lack of anyone looking out for his best interests besides himself. He is, to some degree, thrown to the world and must either fend for himself or perish.

Stephen certainly could not be called meek. He is courageous but in a very different sense than what we see in Jack. Jack's courage is a bubbling, exuberant kind of readiness to meet any challenge head first regardless of the risk. He's the bull on an enemy's quarterdeck. The very first interaction between the two characters is an excellent example of their differences. Sitting in a concert next to each other, Stephen is irritated by Jack who is beating the time on his knee. Jack "turned towards his neighbor with a smile... when he caught the cold and indeed inimical look and heard the whisper,

‘If you really must beat the measure, sir, let me entreat you to do so in time, and not half a beat ahead’” (O’Brian, *Master* 7-8). In the middle of the next movement, after Jack has been carried away again and is not only again beating the time with his fist, but is humming along with the cello, Stephen elbows him sharply in the ribs and hushes him. At the end the two glare at each other, Stephen, “not so much with defiance as with total, heart-felt disapprobation” (O’Brian, *Master* 9). This may not seem so incredibly odd unless we take into consideration the physical build of each man and the fact that Jack was a lieutenant in the Royal Navy while Stephen was merely a civilian. The vast majority of men at the concert were military in some regard so Stephen was not only outmatched in sheer size but in friends as well. Jack could have called any number of men to come and support him while Stephen, we learn shortly thereafter, had few friends and none of them in Minorca. It is amazing then that the look he gives Jack is not one of defiance, an emotion we would expect to see from an outmatched man of lesser authority, but one of disapprobation. It’s as though Stephen assumes a level of superiority, though he has no reason to do so, and disapproves of Jack’s conduct. He is under no authority himself and so respects no other authority, in this situation, than that of the appropriate conduct to expect at a musical recital. Jack breaks the social rules and Stephen assumes the moral superiority of one who is simply right and abuses his subordinate mercilessly and without fear of retribution.

Despite Stephen’s early moral superiority, it is in Jack that we see a sense of paternalism. Jack is a captain and demonstrates his paternal nature in regard to his crew and later to his own children. Stephen, because of his peculiar sense of individuality does

not take authority over many, despite his high academic standing and his position as intelligence agent. As a physician he does have a loblolly boy who falls under his authority which then gives him a chance to demonstrate what paternal tendencies he does possess. Additionally, he eventually has a daughter which requires literal paternal authority from him. In both instances, though, he fails to truly take a paternal role. His belief in freedom, that people should be free to govern themselves, reaches beyond the colonization of islands in the Pacific. Padeen, his Irish-born loblolly boy / physician's assistant and personal servant ashore, is, for the greater part of the series, Stephen's only means of demonstrating any sort of authority. While Stephen cares greatly for Padeen, he also allows him a great deal of freedom. Padeen becomes ill and requires laudanum. The tincture is powerfully addictive and, once the treatment ends at his recovery, Padeen begins to dose himself. By neglecting to keep a close track of his loblolly boy, the one person over whom he has authority, Stephen allows Padeen's addiction to grow. Yes he cares for Padeen and wants what is best for him, but he is not involved enough to be sure Padeen's best interests are served. The result of Stephen's lack of involvement is that Padeen becomes hopelessly addicted to laudanum.

Not being able to communicate with most people (he stutters and speaks primarily Gaelic) Padeen is reduced to stealing laudanum when he can't get the pharmacist to understand what he wants. He is sent to the penal colony in New South Wales for his troubles from which place Stephen eventually rescues him. Stephen goes to great lengths to enact this rescue, even essentially disobeying Jack's direct orders in sneaking him aboard. Additionally, when Stephen becomes immeasurably rich, he offers to set Padeen

up with a small piece of land back in Ireland where he could live happy and quiet the rest of his days – an offer Padeen refuses. Again, Stephen is concerned with Padeen’s best interests, but he fails in being paternal toward him. He wants what is good for Padeen but he doesn’t offer any sort of guidance. Refusing to assume any sort of superiority forces him to remove himself from exerting any influence on his subordinate. He might think it would have been best for Padeen to move back to Ireland and raise a family of his own, but allows him to refuse the offer based on Padeen’s fear of the unknown. Padeen knows Stephen and what it is like to serve him, and, though the thought of living in Ireland on his own is appealing, he is also terrified by the prospect. He opts to stay where he is and Stephen doesn’t object. He allows Padeen to make his own decision, to govern himself regardless of whether he is making a wise decision or one based on fear.

Brigid, Stephen’s daughter, is early left without a mother. Diana dies tragically in a carriage accident, forcing Jack’s wife to take over the care of the young girl while Stephen and Jack are halfway around the world. In the last book of the series, *Blue at the Mizzen*, the war with Napoleon is over. The mission on which Jack and Stephen embark is, overtly, a hydro graphical one. Covertly the plan is to promote Chilean independence from Spain and so gain a new ally for England. It is a cause Stephen believes in, to be sure, but to pursue it he necessarily leaves his young daughter at home. She is certainly in good hands with Sophie and Padeen but he does not make her a priority. He is more concerned with a large group of people he has never met than with the one person in the world to whom he is blood related. Jack makes similar decisions concerning his own children, but there is a different sort of price Jack pays for his distance from home and

family than that paid by Stephen. Jack is “unmanned” by a simple letter from home. Stephen delights in Brigid when he hears of her and when he is around her, but it is more the sort of joy an uncle would take in a niece than that of a father for his daughter. Since his devotion to freedom hinders Stephen from assuming authority over other people, he is not able to demonstrate a true paternal concern for anyone.

Like his propensity for paternalism, Jack has a very clear and obvious means of demonstrating his attentiveness to duty through his commitment to the Royal Navy. He performs his duty based on what is best for the service and what is best for King and Country. Stephen has never committed himself to King, Country, or Navy. He says in light of the difference between his connection to the Navy and Jack’s, “I, for one, am attached, loosely attached, to the service: he is literally *of it*” (O’Brian, *Blue* 128 emphasis in original). Without a commitment to the service, there is no duty for Stephen to perform. He does have duties as a ship’s surgeon, but he performs those in a perfunctory sense. He is not wholly caught up in the health and well-being of the crew. He does care for them and wants to see them healthy, but the level of medical proficiency of the time precludes him from being very effective.

The only other duties to be mentioned which Stephen undertakes are those in the intelligence line. He does incredible work as a spy for England, for which he doesn’t get paid. He does it out of his desire to see freedom which requires the downfall of Napoleon and his oppressive empire. Every machination Stephen enters into is designed to hurt Napoleon and his operatives. It might be said that he has a sense of duty in his pursuit of freedom, but it would be a very different sense than the duty Jack performs. Jack’s duty

is bound to his patriotism, to his country. Stephen, in fighting for freedom, ultimately has to understand that his ideal will never be reached. He was involved with an uprising in Ireland when he was younger, a fact that complicates his service in the Royal Navy, at least to begin with. The uprising was unsuccessful and all of the members involved were in mortal danger from the law. He only survives because no one knows of his involvement. What he takes from this failed attempt to realize an ideal is that acknowledgment that an ideal is essential for enduring struggle, but that it is ultimately unattainable. Therefore, though he acts always through a commitment to freedom, he knows it won't ever be fully gained and he is forced, as quoted earlier, to continually choose the lesser of two evils.

In the instance of the queen of Moahu, for Stephen to support Jack and his mission was to deny the ultimate freedom of the people on the island. Stephen's belief that "you must not tell other nations how to set their house in order; nor must you compel them to be happy" (O'Brian, *Truelove* 148), is immediately followed by his admission that the lesser of two evils is the only possible choice. He chooses to support Jack, even though it will leave the people in the nominal control of England and in doing so saves them from France, but it is not possible for him to opt that no one should control the people of Moahu. Stephen's devotion is to freedom, an ideal to which he can never totally fulfill his duty.

The notion that sexual prowess is a mark of success and virility—a sort of badge to be worn along with a medal of honor—can be supported, to some extent, through the example given by Jack. Stephen's exploits, as it were, are essentially non-existent. He

loves, and eventually marries, a beautiful woman named Diana, who bears him a child. After her death, Stephen shows interest in another woman, Mrs. Christine Wood, recently widowed. She is a naturalist and so the two of them share a great deal of interest. Both women, the only women Stephen ever actually cares for through the whole series, or thinks about with “amorous tendencies,” share a number of traits. In Stephen’s own words all of the women he has ever cared for as an adult, “have held themselves well: they have, all, without the least consciousness or affectation, taken quite long strides for a woman, placing each foot directly in the line of its fellow – a wholly natural grace” (O’Brian, *Blue* 35). This is all he says about the qualities his loves have shared, but it gives us a glimpse of just what he finds attractive in a woman, especially if we look at the two examples we are given in the series. They are very self confident. They take long strides, not clumsy large women who walk like men, but women who have that natural grace, unaffected, and yet are confident enough to take long strides and carry themselves confidently. Diana demonstrates this trait in much more than just her walk. She drinks, she drives a coach and four (which ultimately is the cause of her death), she raises and rides horses and, before they were married, she attaches herself to a wealthy man from America, sailing across the ocean to live as a kept woman. She flouts tradition, entertaining when her husband is at sea when, as Jack’s wife Sophie admonishes her, she shouldn’t be seen out any more than is absolutely necessary. Similarly, Christine Wood does away with tradition, though perhaps to a lesser degree. She is much more intelligent than most women, having grown up closely with a brother and his friend (Stephen), who were interested in science and studying nature. She went with the boys and shared their

interests. She “had in fact dwelt in [Stephen’s] memory, his mind, his recollection since their first meeting in Sierra Leone: not so much her striking good looks – slim, long–legged, almost androgynous – as her modesty, clarity of mind, and quite exceptional breadth of knowledge, covering most of the areas in which he took most delight” (O’Brian, *Blue* 34-35). At one point, before Stephen’s or Christina’s respective spouses had died, the two of them are out looking for rare birds and, in order to retrieve a wounded specimen she takes her clothes off to swim across a creek. It is done simply out of necessity, but a woman like Sophie, an average woman of the time period, would have died before being exposed in such a situation. Christine values the bird above her modesty which is not a great concern anyway since everything is done in light of scientific discovery in the presence of another naturalist who was also a physician, used to seeing unclothed bodies. Stephen is not attracted to meek nineteenth century women like Sophie, he appreciates women with much stronger personalities.

Stephen could easily be seen, in light of Jack’s exploits and his own interests in strong women, as a weak man when it comes to women. It almost seems that he either wants a woman to control him or doesn’t want one at all. His pursuit of Diana, a very controlling woman, seems to support this kind of desire. However, once they are married, he does not allow her to simply take control. The two of them fight passionately and make-up passionately. Certainly his virility might be called into question, except that O’Brian says of him:

Stephen was of course discreet: but in spite of a discretion carried to something not far from an apparent frigidity, he had strong, even very strong male impulses and a recollection of Christine swimming in stark innocent nakedness across a clear African stream to bring back a wounded

ibis... had very often inhabited and indeed tormented his mind, preventing incipient sleep. (*Blue* 35)

The point at which Stephen departs from Jack, since they both experience “very strong male impulses” is self control. Stephen keeps his impulses under control. Admittedly he uses laudanum for a long period of time which represses sexual desire and function, but he stops at the point at which he and Diana are married. He looks dispassionately upon the bare bosoms of the many native girls in the Pacific and is not tempted by brothels or loose aristocratic women.

Though virile he saves his sexual desires for the one woman to whom he is committed. Part of this difference must come from the fact that he is not xenophobic. Stephen speaks several languages fluently and learns to identify with people from many of the cultures to which he is exposed. The native women are, in his eyes, essentially the same as any European man or woman. They all equally deserve respect and freedom. Similarly, Stephen sees women who work in brothels as fellow human beings. His interaction with young Clarissa Oaks is evidence of that. He knows the intimate details of her past, that she lived and worked in a brothel, and yet treats her with dignity.

Stephen’s ideas are very modern, or perhaps even post-modern. To treat men and women as equals is unheard of at this time. It is commonly understood that the physical differences between the two sexes result in men being more rational, capable of reason and complicated thought, while women are less intellectually able, governed by emotion and physically weak. As an educated physician, Stephen should have been at the forefront of this debate, siding with the understanding of the period as he does in all other arenas of knowledge. We are given to understand that these peculiar ideas come from

Stephen's revolutionary background and his all-encompassing commitment to universal freedom. But it is hard to think that he could so deviate from the common scientific understanding of the sexes. He cannot be, completely, a nineteenth century man, nor represent a nineteenth century masculinity.

CHAPTER SIX

IMPLICATIONS: LOOKING BEYOND CONSUMMATE MASCULINITY

As men become more domesticated, less of the “bull on an enemy’s quarterdeck,” masculinity *must* be redefined. Essential to the difficult task of maintaining masculinity in the newly domesticated realm of England in the nineteenth century is the idea that Adams takes from one of Tennyson’s poems in stating that “manhood cannot be *sustained* within domesticity, since the ideal is incompatible with ease” (10 emphasis in original). If manhood cannot be sustained within domesticity then there is no longer an option for most men to be masculine. They must be content with mere maleness. As Adams states, “reconfigurations of masculinity frequently compensated for the loss of traditional, more assured forms of masculine identity and authority; they endeavored to restore the prerogatives of a ‘manhood’ – as distinct from mere ‘maleness’ – that had been severely eroded by the pressures of modernity” (5). With the rise of the middle class in England came an increasing number of men who engaged in intellectual labor which was in many ways an effeminate method of employ. Men in the middle part of the nineteenth century have certainly lost a traditional sense of what it means to be masculine.

The implications of what defines masculinity in society goes beyond simple self identity. Nancy Armstrong talks about the roles of masculinity and femininity in sexual attraction. She describes the way in which women are attracted more to men who require domesticating rather than genteel men who are already domesticated. She demonstrates

this claim through the example of Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* in saying, "Robert is the more desirable for possessing something male within himself that requires taming. For it is clearly he who makes a world in which women have a place and function" (Armstrong 221). If all of the men become domesticated then, in some way, there is less of a need for the domesticating influence of women in their lives. For women to perform their role as feminine requires that men perform their role as masculine. In order for men to continue performing masculinity, they must create a new definition of what that means.

Moving into the middle and later nineteenth century, as the Victorian mind-set grows, the concept of self-control becomes a very important one in performing masculinity. James Adams comments, "Self-discipline is of course a fabled Victorian attribute, whose extraordinary prominence in nineteenth-century culture historians have explained as a function of the conjoint rise of Evangelicalism and an increasingly pervasive market economy" (4). Neither evangelicalism nor a market economy has much of an influence over characters like Jack Aubrey who have spent most of their lives at sea in the Napoleonic Wars. As the wars come to an end and the Navy dwindles, the country begins to require men who are more domestic than the erstwhile heroes. Writers like Thomas Carlyle:

depict their own intellectual labors in markedly varied rhetorics, but those rhetorics are persistently related in their appeal to a small number of models of masculine identity: the gentleman, the prophet, the dandy, the priest, and the soldier. Each of these models is typically understood as the incarnation of an ascetic regimen, an elaborately articulated self-discipline as a distinctly masculine attribute and in their different ways embody masculinity as a virtuoso asceticism. (Adams 2)

Again, this newer concept of masculinity, one of a number of virtuoso

asceticisms, does not fit with the character of Jack Aubrey who eats too much, drinks too much and can't keep his hands off of pretty young women. The robust, hot-headed commander of a ship in His Majesty's Navy cannot be required to keep himself under stringent control. He must be able to act, almost instinctually, in the heat of the moment in order to be victorious in battle. Along with that lack of self-restraint come the faults we see in Jack. His sexual morality is compromised, and the nation has had enough of his kind of masculinity. The qualities, then, that become important are more restrictive, better suited to life ashore in genteel society. The men must change in order to fit better with the women from whom purity is already required. Additionally, the occupations which are now open to young men have changed. The military is still there, but with the drastic reduction in numbers necessary to sustain a peacetime military, it is hardly the avenue for quick advancement, glory, and riches it had been. To return to the options facing young Edmund Bertram, the clergy and law are the only ones left. But the changes in the culture require that we add to that list as the "increasing market economy" makes room for men of business.

Stephen does fit better than Jack into Adams' virtuoso asceticism. Stephen is very self-disciplined when it comes to the opposite sex. As a medical man his passions are rarely aroused. What he lacks is what Adams describes as "a norm of 'manliness' identified above all with honest, straightforward speech and action, shorn of any hint of subtlety or equivocation" (14). Stephen projects this quality, but he cannot live by it as we are reminded time and time again, due to his habitual duplicity resulting from a lifetime of intelligence work. To be an effective agent he must uphold the veneer of

respectability, but he is forever closed, guarded, and though he would easily tell the truth most of the time, would lie just as well if it were necessary or simply more convenient.

In some ways, it seems that O'Brien is putting a Consummate Masculinity from a pre-Victorian period together with a Victorian representative of masculinity in the characters of Jack and Stephen respectively. Inasmuch as Stephen doesn't fit the Victorian virtuoso asceticism, though, there is something different, perhaps bigger happening. O'Brien has put together two very different concepts of what it means to be masculine. One is clearly an early nineteenth century, pre-Victorian Consummate Masculinity, while the other is, at least in part, more representative of the Victorian, or even post-Victorian (perhaps twentieth century) masculinity. Stephen certainly holds a very twentieth century concept of the equality of human beings regardless of sex, nationality or ethnicity. He fails to meet the standards of Consummate Masculinity as well as Victorian straightforwardness, yet he continues to be a masculine man. Through the juxtaposition of O'Brien's two characters we can perceive a commentary on, at least some of, the transformations through which masculinity has come. It is no longer possible to perform the Consummate Masculinity personified in Jack Aubrey; not that men cannot be patriotic, self-reliant, courageous, paternal, attentive to duty, and sexually promiscuous, but that the society in which these traits can now exist no longer values them as it did. Therefore, as "gender is always a doing" (Butler 25), the performance that will be recognized as masculine will look much different. What that performance will now look like is not easy to say. The example of Stephen, as a foil to Jack, seems to say, since he doesn't quite fit into other masculine molds, not that the definition of what

comprises a Consummate Masculinity has changed, but, perhaps, that it is no longer possible to be Consummately Masculine. Living in the same period as Jack and yet displaying the precise opposite of all of Jack's masculine traits, Stephen still manages to *be* masculine. Unfortunately we aren't given any answers in his example. We are shown only that the old model no longer works and are left to pick through the remaining pieces of a once-Consummate Masculinity to find, as Jack would say, what "rose pods" we may.

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