



W. W. NORTON & COMPANY, INC.

500 FIFTH AVENUE • NEW YORK, N. Y. 10110

TEL (212) 354-5500 • FAX (212) 869-0856

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Louise Brockett
212/790-4266
Lbrockett@wwnorton.com

Patrick O’Brian’s Acclaimed Aubrey/Maturin Series to Be Released in e-Book Format

“The best historical novels ever written.”

—Richard Snow, *The New York Times Book Review*

New York, NY, November 21, 2011—Patrick O’Brian’s Aubrey/Maturin series of historical novels—described by David Mamet in *The New York Times* as “a masterpiece”—will be released by W. W. Norton & Company for the first time as e-books on December 5, 2011, in anticipation of the holiday season. This e-publication will expose O’Brian’s work to a new generation of readers and bring a fresh and versatile reading experience to his loyal and dedicated fans. Starling Lawrence, editor-at-large at W. W. Norton and Patrick O’Brian’s editor, noted, “Now that the novels are available digitally, readers who prefer the e-book format can have this collection instantly at their fingertips—as well the enviable pleasure of reading O’Brian’s astonishing series for the first time.”

Set in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic Wars, O’Brian’s twenty-volume Aubrey/Maturin series has been critically acclaimed throughout the English speaking world and has sold 7.5 million copies in the U.S. alone since Norton started issuing the books in 1990. In 2003, Twentieth Century Fox introduced the series to millions of filmgoers worldwide with *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*, starring Russell Crowe and Paul Bettany and directed by Peter Weir. The film was nominated for ten Academy Awards, including Best Picture. The series centers on the enduring friendship between naval officer Jack Aubrey and physician (and spy) Stephen Maturin. In series order, the books are *Master and Commander*, *Post Captain*, *H.M.S. Surprise*, *The Mauritius Command*, *Desolation Island*, *The Fortune of War*, *The Surgeon’s Mate*, *The Ionian Mission*, *Treason’s Harbour*, *The Far Side of the World*, *The Reverse of the Medal*, *The Letter of Marque*, *The Thirteen Gun Salute*, *The Nutmeg of Consolation*, *The Truelove*, *The Wine-Dark Sea*, *The Commodore*, *The Yellow Admiral*, *The Hundred Days*, and *Blue at the Mizzen*.

(more)

Patrick O’Brian (1914 –2000) wrote *Master and Commander*, his first book to feature Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin, “with intense pleasure,” as he later put it. The novel was published in 1969, and though it initially drew little attention, over the next three decades O’Brian would produce an epic series that, as George Will declared in his column, “should have been on those lists of the greatest novels of the 20th century.” The publication of each successive book found new readers who were swept up by the thrilling naval battles, period detail, and exquisite prose, but most of all by the compelling story of Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin—two unlikely friends who became one of the great duos in all of literature.

In 1991, *The New York Times Book Review* published a cover story by Richard Snow proclaiming the Aubrey/Maturin novels “the best historical novels ever written,” and in the ensuing years, the series became a phenomenon. O’Brian’s publicity tours drew throngs of admiring fans to venues such as the New York Public Library, the National Archives, the U.S.S. Constitution Museum, and the San Diego Maritime Museum. The world’s largest active wooden tall ship once sailed into New York Harbor expressly to fête a visiting O’Brian; the books consistently hit bestseller lists and spawned a newsletter, a calendar, a cookbook, CDs of the music Jack and Stephen might have played, and a compendium of nautical terms.

Numerous celebrities have stepped forward as fans of the Aubrey/Maturin series, among them Joan Didion, James Taylor, George Will, David Mamet, Nick Offerman, Joe Hill, Naomi Novik, and A.S. Byatt. Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards found himself relating to the series’ central relationship, writing in his recent memoir *Life*, “I fell in love with [O’Brian’s] writing straightaway, at first with *Master and Commander*. It wasn’t primarily the Nelson and Napoleonic period, more the human relationships. He just happened to have that backdrop. And of course having characters isolated in the middle of the goddamn sea gives more scope. . . . It’s about friendship, camaraderie. Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin always remind me a bit of Mick and me.”

It is this rich and nuanced characterization, carried out over a gripping twenty-volume narrative, that continues to captivate such a wide and disparate readership. “The novels are often loosely described as adventure stories,” his editor Starling Lawrence explains, “but my view is that men admire in O’Brian the same qualities they find in C. S. Forester’s Hornblower novels, whereas women read him for the same pleasures they find in the work of Jane Austen.” While the release of these novels as e-books will make the series immediately accessible to those not yet familiar with O’Brian’s work, established fans will also have a new means of referencing the trivia and details they so cherish.

Patrick O’Brian’s Aubrey/Maturin series has rightly been heralded as one of the best literary works of the 20th century. Now, the release of these novels as e-books will give joy of discovery, and rediscovery, to fans new and old. As Jack Aubrey would say, there is not a moment to lose.

(more)

About Patrick O'Brian

Patrick O'Brian, born 1914, was a prolific novelist, biographer and translator. In addition to the Aubrey/Maturin books, he wrote several novels including *Testimonies*, *The Golden Ocean*, and *The Unknown Shore*, as well as biographies of Joseph Banks and Picasso. He translated many works from French into English, among them the novels and memoirs of Simone de Beauvoir, the first volume of Jean Lacouture's biography of Charles de Gaulle, and famed fugitive Henri Charrière's memoir *Papillon*. In 1995 O'Brian was awarded the CBE; in 1997 he was awarded an honorary doctorate of letters by Trinity College Dublin. He lived for many years in the Southwest of France and died in Dublin in January 2000.

Patrick O'Brian's Aubrey/Maturin Series

1. **MASTER AND COMMANDER (978-0-393-05895-6)** Jack Aubrey meets Stephen Maturin and commands the brig HMS Sophie to victory over the Spanish frigate Cacafuego.
2. **POST CAPTAIN (978-0-393-05993-9)** Jack and Stephen vie for the affections of Diana Villiers.
3. **H.M.S. SURPRISE (978-0-393-08846-5)** Jack and Stephen sail the HMS Surprise to India for a dramatic fleet action against the French.
4. **THE MAURITIUS COMMAND (978-0-393-06049-2)** Jack must contend with two troublesome captains, one vain and one cruel.
5. **DESOLATION ISLAND (978-0-393-06387-5)** The Waakzaamheid chases the Leopard south to the glories of Antarctica.
6. **THE FORTUNE OF WAR (978-0-393-08849-6)** Jack encounters the American navy, is taken prisoner, and witnesses the fateful clash of the Shannon and the Chesapeake.
7. **THE SURGEON'S MATE (978-0-393-06376-9)** Jack and Stephen are rescued from a French prison thanks to Diana's diamond.
8. **THE IONIAN MISSION (978-0-393-06377-6)** The Surprise is sent to intervene in the tangled politics of the Balkans.
9. **TREASON'S HARBOUR (978-0-393-06381-3)** Jack crosses the desert and is saved from treachery in Malta by Stephen's cunning.
10. **THE FAR SIDE OF THE WORLD (978-0-393-06382-0)** Jack and Stephen encounter typhoons, castaways, shipwrecks, murder, and insanity in the Pacific.
11. **THE REVERSE OF THE MEDAL (978-0-393-06383-7)** Jack, lured into a disastrous investment by French agents, is court-martialed and disgraced.
12. **THE LETTER OF MARQUE (978-0-393-06365-3)** Cast out of the Royal Navy, Jack sets sail in the Surprise as a privateer, and Stephen's taste for opium takes a serious turn.
13. **THE THIRTEEN GUN SALUTE (978-0-393-06366-0)** A typhoon overtakes Jack and his crew in the South China Sea, and Stephen engages in a deadly cat-and-mouse game with French agents.
14. **THE NUTMEG OF CONSOLATION (978-0-393-08847-2)** After fighting off pirates and being marooned, Jack heads for the grim penal colony in Australia, where Stephen's temper provokes a duel and a diplomatic crisis.
15. **THE TRUE LOVE (978-0-393-06368-4)** Jack and Stephen mastermind a war among the cannibals, and a mysterious female convict shows dangerous jealousies aboard the Surprise.
16. **THE WINE-DARK SEA (978-0-393-06369-1)** A submarine volcanic eruption serves as backdrop to revolution in South America and a memorable excursion into the Andes.
17. **THE COMMODORE (978-0-393-08848-9)** Jack and Stephen have a strange homecoming, followed by a vigorous action to foil the French invasion of Ireland.
18. **THE YELLOW ADMIRAL (978-0-393-06371-4)** Jack is rescued from the doldrums of peace and from amorous difficulties by Napoleon's escape from Elba.
19. **THE HUNDRED DAYS (978-0-393-08851-9)** The cunning of Stephen and the seamanship of Jack prevent Napoleon from conquering Europe at Waterloo.
20. **BLUE AT THE MIZZEN (978-0-393-08850-2)** After Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, Jack and Stephen must help Chile fight for her independence from Spain.

(more)

Praise for Patrick O’Brian’s Aubrey/Maturin Series

“I devoured Patrick O’Brian’s 20-volume masterpiece as if it had been so many tots of Jamaica grog.”

–Christopher Hitchens, *Slate*

“[O’Brian’s] Aubrey-Maturin series, 20 novels of the Royal Navy in the Napoleonic Wars, is a masterpiece. It will outlive most of today’s putative literary gems as Sherlock Holmes has outlived Bulwer-Lytton, as Mark Twain has outlived Charles Reade.”

–David Mamet, *The New York Times*

“Gripping and vivid . . . a whole, solidly living world for the imagination to inhabit.”

–A. S. Byatt

“I fell in love with [O’Brian’s] writing straightaway, at first with *Master and Commander*. It wasn’t primarily the Nelson and Napoleonic period, more the human relationships. He just happened to have that backdrop. And of course having characters isolated in the middle of the goddamn sea gives more scope. Just great characterizations, which I still cherish. It’s about friendship, camaraderie. Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin always remind me a bit of Mick and me.”

–Keith Richards, *Life*

“O’Brian’s Aubrey-Maturin volumes . . . should have been on those lists of the greatest novels of the 20th century.”

–George Will

“The best historical novels ever written. . . . On every page Mr. O’Brian reminds us with subtle artistry of the most important of all historical lessons: that times change but people don’t, that the griefs and follies and victories of the men and women who were here before us are in fact the maps of our own lives.”

–Richard Snow, *The New York Times Book Review*

“The Aubrey-Maturin series . . . far beyond any episodic chronicle, ebbs and flows with the timeless tide of character and the human heart.”

–Ken Ringle, *The Washington Post*

“There is not a writer alive whose work I value over his.”

–Stephen Becker, *The Chicago Sun-Times*

“It has been something of a shock to find myself—an inveterate reader of girl books—obsessed with Patrick O’Brian’s Napoleonic-era historical novels. . . . What keeps me hooked are the evolving relationships between Jack and Stephen and the women they love.”

–Tamar Lewin, *The New York Times*

“Patrick O’Brian is unquestionably the Homer of the Napoleonic Wars.”

–James Hamilton-Paterson, *The New Republic*

###