

Transcription of the hand-written portions of

## **21: The Final Unfinished Voyage of Jack Aubrey**

The following transcription of the handwritten portions of Patrick O'Brian's manuscript for his final novel are based on not only my only ponderings on the subject, but also upon those of several other interested students of O'Brian's writings. A few conventions to be noted:

- I have not included words, phrases or sentences struck out by O'Brian in the original manuscript.
- I have used crossed-out text (~~text~~) to designate redundant words or letters that I believe O'Brian would have deleted upon revising the manuscript.
- Text in **bold** is drawn from the typewritten draft or earlier in the handwritten manuscript to provide a lead-in for the text that immediately follows.
- Text in single square brackets [----] is material missing from the manuscript but suggested by its context.
- Text in double square brackets [[----]] supplies a word appropriate from the context but illegible in the original.
- In some cases punctuation has been added to regularize the text.

Some words in the original can be read with another meaning than what I have supplied, but I have used my own best judgment; for reasons of legibility I have chosen not to mark those words.

Bruce Trinqu

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**'Oh come, my lord,' said Stephen, 'what you say sounds**  
very like the French of the northern provinces: and I do assure  
you I have patients aboard to whom I owe my first duty, to  
say nothing of what awaits me at the Cape.'

'My lord,' said Jack, 'even an admiral cannot overrule  
a medical man -- it is in the Articles of War -- and even if  
he could he would have no success with Maturin.  
You may turn a bear from his vomit, but I do solemnly affirm that

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**'My lord,' said Jack, 'even an admiral cannot overrule a medical man -- it is in the Articles of War -- and even if he could he would have no success with Maturin. You may turn a bear from his vomit, but I do solemnly affirm that** the First Lord of the Admiralty could not turn Maturin from his set course, perverse though it may be. But here is my reefer and the barge is alongside: I thank you very heartily indeed for your hospitality, and I shall most willingly carry your nephew to the Cape. Good day to you, my lord. Come, Stephen.'

An admiral's barge, though spacious, is still a public place and they said little as they returned to the ship.

{Note from Patrick O'Brian: No. I shall have to rearrange these pages on the typewriter }

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ten bears of the largest size could not deter Maturin from what he thought right. And I do assure you ~~you~~ [my] lord that we have some people on the sick-list in a very parlous state.'

'How do you mean, *parlous*?'

'Well, my lord, nip and tuck as you might say, or touch and go. And it is my impression that as soon as his assistant, Dr. Jacob, comes aboard he means to operate on a strangled hernia.'

'A twisting of the guts, my lord. The poor soul, swelling above because his shipmates feed him twice at every meal, and he shrinks below: the patient is a sailmaker's mate.'

'Well. I am sorry for him, but I am sure to have nothing to recommend but a double handful of small-shot followed by a pint of castor oil. Yet it really is a medicoe's business & I shall certainly leave it to them. Would it be a very bloody affair?'

'Shockingly so, I fear: though with clips and swabs we shall try to diminish the flow.'

'I might mention it to Miller. He walking miles to see the castrating of lamb and bullock -- geldings, for that matter.' The Admiral gazed up at the taut sails with unmoved pleasure. 'Now with it getting something like the full Trades, clear of the land and its turbulences,' said the Admiral, and presently he formed the whole South African squadron into the sailing order, sending his guests back to their ships in the kindest manner.

Truly, once they had sunk the land it was the purest sailing: nearly 300 miles in the first day, never touching tack nor sheet, and even the *Suffolk* kept in splendidly. How they missed their keenest navigators Hansen and Daniel, who would so have loved

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drawing the almost purely straight lines cutting the parallels at even angles. But how they enjoyed their occasional northern albatross, the not infrequent whales, the almost steady companionship of quite a large variety of sharks and even rays!

Of \_\_\_\_ [Jack]'s twins began to grow rather offensively knowledgeable about sea-going affairs but Padeen (tho[ugh] his English remained strange, incorrect and largely incomprehensible for the finer forms) managed to keep them within bounds, and what he could not do, Brigid did. It did not make them very pleasant companions but it rendered them tolerable; and the southern coast of Africa and the Portuguese possessions came daily nearer.

Miller, who called on the ladies almost every day to suggest piquet or backgammon (with little success on the whole) was much excited by the prospect of Loando, and he climbed as far as [he] dared to catch a first glimpse of the shore -- conceivably a symbol of power, status and indeed perhaps marriage.

A dimness on the western horizon, soundings, very exact observation of sun, moon, planets, and a wonderfully timely eclipse of one of Jupiter's satellites give them their time to the minute or even less.

'Now it can come hell or high water,' said Harding, the *Suffolk's* first lieutenant and a [[prime]] astronomer. 'Now you know exactly where we are.'

He said this in the presence of Admiral Aubrey (no mean astronomer himself) who shook his head at the words; so did everyone else in the chartroom, sometimes imperceptibly. But imperceptibly or not, within seconds the sky split with a most enormous roar -- so prodigious that the twins, well accustomed to gentler weather rushed shrieking back [to] their mother's bed.

All night it bellowed and thundered. St Elmo's Fire appeared on three separate masts and the bowsprit. Three staysails were blown out of their bolt-ropes in the first shock, and the foretopgallant. With infinite pains on a deck that never for a moment stopped throwing

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itself about in the most extravagant manner, they stowed all that could be stowed and then turned to the pump for the very serious mass of water still below and to [[plain]] swab and bucket for the knees-deep wet that washed from side to side of the sick-berth, the captain's cabin and the lieutenants' store-room.

A heavy night, with nothing to eat but wet biscuit & rum; but it did clear before dawn and rising sun showed not only beautiful clear but the coast of Loando with its town and its [[run]] of shore. The sea was still grievously troubled and there were half a dozen fishing-boats at least half-wrecked or worse. The South African squadron as a whole had lain to very early in the night -- their topsails were above the horizon -- so *Suffolk* picked up the fishermen, a[nd] towing their boats carried them into Loando, having signaled his intention to the squadron.

They were most lovingly received -- many of the fishermen were relatives -- and they were feasted (though at short notice) in the most splendid [manner], which as far as the exhausted hands were concerned, went down very well indeed. The Admiral commanding squadron was housed in a rapidly brushed governor's [house]: the nominal white squadron had no flag officer of its [own]; but Jack who was after all a rear-admiral of the blue, lived with all his family and senior officers in the former military command, next to still not inconsiderable barrack.

In spite of the shortness of the storm the ships had suffered extremely and he, Jack and the other captains were almost perpetually in the well-equipped and capable dockage. One day, as they were coming back to the Governor's house -- a shingle strand with singularly coconut palms and their usually birds -- Stephen met them and the Admiral asked after his hernia.

'Thank you, sir,' said Stephen, 'he has shown the most remarkable improvement and I think I shall operate in the next two days, now that Jacob is returned. Perhaps I shall mention it to Captain Miller.'

'Yes, indeed: he loves medical matters. But it is not particularly [bloody,]

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is it?'

'Oh no. Nothing like an amputation. You open intelligently and you are on the job at once.'

'Well, in that case it would be very kind of you, I am sure.'

Stephen carried on ~~the~~ [to] the military headquarters, and walking in he found Miller already there, not to his surprise ~~although~~ [because] it was an almost daily occurrence, but surprising in the way the bunches of flowers had increased and in Christine's marked unfavourable expression.

'Oh Captain Miller,' he said, accompanying him to the door. 'I happened to tell the Admiral that I will probably [perform an] operation upon a favorable hernia tomorrow. Should you like to attend?'

'Is it a bloody operation?'

'Oh no, not what one should ~~really~~ [call] really bloody. If your first incision is badly mistaken it can be somewhat distressing, but we do not usually mistake.'

'I am sure you do not. But if I may I will excuse myself for this occasion though with many thanks for your polite attention.'

'Good day to you, sir.'

'Stephen, my dear,' said Christine. I am afraid I must beg you to tell that man not to call unless he is invited. He is becoming quite a nuisance - a wonderfully confident nuisance. He spent a long time talking to me through all these flowers and telling me that when he had taken up his appointed position at the Cape and when he had married to [a] woman he had chosen, there would be virtually nobody in the colony to compete with him in wealth and influence. I have met with some fools in my life even some god-damned fools, and a good many of them; but I have never met with such a *confident* ass as Miller: I suppose he

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is completely blinded by his position, appointment and I dare say wealth, as well as gross stupidity. Stephen, please get me rid of him. He is making me ridiculous as well as himself.'

'My dear, I shall attend to [it].'

It was as soon as the South African squadron was fit for sea that the Admiral ordered them to sea, there to carry out a very considerable great-gun exercise fairly close in shore to please their Portuguese friends. The last preparation had not yet taken place before Stephen Maturin met Captain Miller. 'Oh Captain Miller,' he said, stepping aside detaching himself from his friends. 'I have a message for you (lowering his voice). Mrs Wood begs you will not call again with[out] an invitation.' Miller could not at first grasp the meaning though his complacent smile did fade. Stephen repeated his words.

'It is not true,' cried Miller. 'Christine never said that.'

'I assure you those were her words.'

'They were not.'

'You give me the lie?' asked Stephen, very low, approaching his face.

'Yes,' cried Miller, and struck him hard.

'You will appoint your friends,' said Stephen, 'These gentlemen --' nodding towards Harding and Joseph (who had rejoined a little after midnight), 'will attend to my interests. Good day to you, sir, until early tomorrow morning.' He touched his hat and walked on.

Harding was obliged to leave them to buy some particularly choice handkerchiefs for his wife, and Stephen said, 'Oh my dear Jacob, how sorry I am to entangle you with that silly little affair even before you have answered half your questions on your most admirable report on the Argentine. Shall we have time for a small, well-planned uncomplicated hernia before going deeply into politics? I should have to get word off to Sir Joseph directly since we must sail early tomorrow afternoon.'

'I should imagine so - [a] really healthy, lean patient with a simple hernia is no great matter and I have already coded the essence of my report. And a simple affair of this kind a blow given & resented is no greater matter either: small enough

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on the level ground behind the groyne, a little after sunrise, with a stretcher, his man and a local surgeon. You expect no serious injury?'

'No, a pierced shoulder at the most.'

'Very well, let us look at our patient & perhaps operate at once, even at the cost of landing him until the exercise is over.'

In fact, although the operation went perfectly well, the man Haines was landed at the Admiral's particular request on these grounds: first that it stood to reason some gun or other would burst or overset, and second, that the roaring of broadsides would arouse his feeling and excite the blood; whereas on shore he would be perfectly calm and rest under Mrs Aubrey's and Mrs Wood's care.

But the Admiral was worried, very much was worried, by his nephew's absence in the morning, and by the rumours brought by the Admiral's secretary that Miller had flatly refused to fight with swords. He would pistol or he would not fight. Maturin's seconds would have none of it: it was their principal who had been struck -- it was he who chose the weapons. That was always the case: it always had been the case. It was the Law of Moses.

'Of course it is,' said the Admiral. 'I always preferred the gentleman's weapon ~~who~~ [when] I went out: except when I was the aggressor and had to take the other man's choice. Pray, Mr. Martin,' he went on, 'pray run out & see if you can catch them. Tell him privately from me that if he don't fight he is disgraced for ever & can expect no notice from me -- no[r] from the Ministry. And tell ~~me~~ [him] a sword wound given by a reasonably decent creature is not so wicked, particularly if you dress it with marshmall and heartsease.'

On the field, from which the few venal onlookers had been shoed with appalling violence, the scene was only just not ridiculous. Miller had been urged forward by his seconds and he kept telling them that it was perfectly unfair -- he knew everything about pistols: he would meet any man with a pistol. But he knew nothing about swords

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They, shame-faced, kept telling him it was the law of the duel. He could either apologise on his knees, using any terms his adversary saw fit to impose, or he must fight. There were no two ways about. Mr Martin whispered into his ear, 'Your uncle will not speak to you if you do not fight.'

They thrust a sword into his hand, pointed towards that of his adversary. The chief second held them on his outstretched blade, cried 'Gentlemen, engage,' and strode back.

Two, three or even four clashes and Miller's flew into the air, it landing between them. Stephen put his foot on it and his sword point against [Miller]. 'Do you withdraw?' he asked. 'Miller, do you withdraw your words entirely?'

'I do, entirely.'

'Yes? Then we have said enough. Good day to you, gentlemen; and I thank you heartily for your presence.'

'He shared all with a set of tarts,' said Wainright into Killick's eager ear. He was Miller's servant and he cordially disliked his master: but since he was a child and grandchild of Caxley House he had learnt to express himself in gentler expressions -- not that these had any currency whatsoever with Killick or nine-tenths of the lower deck.

'Where does he stow himself now?'

'Why, in the little cabin behind his Lordship: and I doubt he comes out of it so soon. It is fair wonderful what a face of brass will do, but I doubt anyone could face the country -- the English country, the part around us, or in London - having as near as dammit refused to fight. I remember how his Lordship went out half-dozen times when I was young and always bloodied his sword ... Coming sir,' he cried, and vanished aft.

Killick delighted in pineapple-shrub and pig's trotters; but they did not nearly reach his high and exalted pleasure in very specifically obscene stories however improbable (which alas he could never remember accurately or even at all) and accounts of high life.

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He did not come on deck the next day, that of the prodigious, the very moving great-gun exercise; nor did he appear for the small-arms exercise in which he had trained some of the Marines. From time to time he turned into the wardroom to pick up a newspaper when almost nobody was there. His appearance never altered from its perpetually mottled sweating complexion, yet he frequently changed his uniform, blaming his servant for any slip.

Some days of quite untypical S[outh] African weather slowed the squadron ~~and~~ ~~possible~~ and it ~~was~~ [may] well have been during the conversation