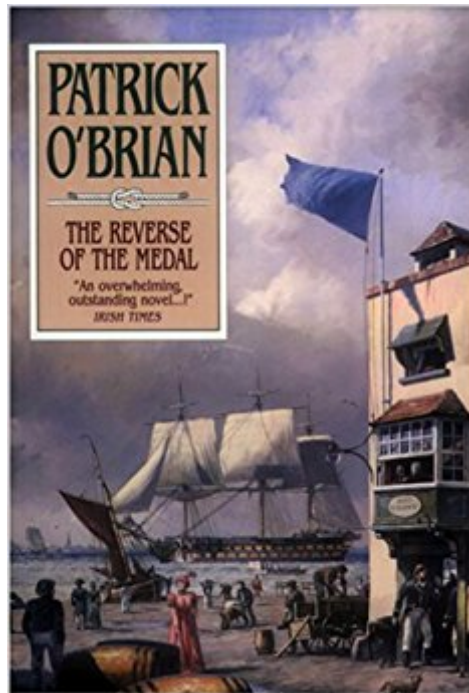




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Reverse Of The Medal (Aubrey Maturin, No. 11)



Synopsis

In the early 1800s, the British Navy stands as the only bulwark against the militant fanaticism of Napoleonic France. Captain Jack Aubrey, R.N., ashore after a successful tour of duty, is persuaded by a casual acquaintance to make certain investments in the city. This innocent decision ensnares him in the London criminal underground and in government espionage, the province of his friend Stephen Maturin. Is Aubrey's humiliation and the threatened ruin of his career a deliberate plot? This dark tale is a fitting backdrop to the brilliant characterization, sparkling dialogue, and meticulous detail which O'Brien's readers have come to expect.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ashore between cruises, Captain Jack Aubrey is persuaded to sink some money into an investment scheme. Soon this innocent decision enmeshes him in various criminal and even treasonous enterprises, which threaten to destroy his entire career. Bad luck? A deliberate plot? Read this latest installment of the Aubrey-Maturin saga to find out. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"An overwhelming, outstanding novel!" --Irish Times

O'Brien is a master storyteller and part of what makes this 21 volume series so addicting is the sheer mastery of the craft. When I first embarked on this literary voyage I was certain that as the volumes progressed the story would become repetitious and predictable. I felt this because how

many stories can someone come up with that involves sea voyages and battles. Not only was my suspicion wrong, it is clearly part of his style to come up with totally different scenarios therefore encompassing every literary technique ever. This number 11 installment is mainly on land but contains one of the longest chase sequences in all of the series so far. This is a great example of the playful structure O'Brien utilizes like a painter applying meaning to a canvass. I love when the story goes on land for awhile, its necessary to make the already complex character development work even better. This volume falls into the experimental category --like *H.M.S. Surprise*--and *Fortune of War*. Experimental in that it stands alone apart from segwaying from another volume. While the whole series is essentially one long story some of the volumes explore the human condition deeper than just being at sea and battling other ships can do. This one gets dark in that Jack is being set up and appears to be in the process of military disgrace and possibly jail time. Like *H.M.S. Surprise* Steven takes over the spotlight with Jack in jail. Sure its a little depressing but still has the constant comedic wit. I love how even when he is not at sea his rugged crew literally lives with him (or key member like Killick and Bonden. So back to O'Brien style--he knows its going to get heavy so thats why he makes literally 1/3 of the book a chase--or the first part of the book. Being that there is 21 and this is only the 11th im sure Jack and company will get out of this bind. I cant wait to see.

I recall reading somewhere that O'Brien must have realized he started this series too late in historical context due to the popularity of the characters and the story. This book is apparently one of the stories intended to try to stretch out the series. Unlike book 10 this one is so packed with Aubrey's personal weaknesses, his flaws, that we've come to respect. Too trusting by half. Too loyal. Too gullible outside of command at sea. O'Brien successfully inserted a short, by calendar, story into the overall Aubrey timeline that tells so much about Aubrey and Maturin both. We are also given a glimpse of a true stock exchange scandal that brings out the best and the worst of those around Aubrey. I appreciated O'Brien's depiction of loyalty among naval sailors, Aubrey's friends and his family. We get an intimate look into society in the era that succeeds in painting a picture we wouldn't know without accounts like this. I highly recommend reading *The Reverse of the Medal* to anyone deciding whether or not they should. It is a great story. Go ahead, buy it. Read it and be entertained.

This is one of the most intriguing, interesting, and generally historically accurate series concerning the period of the world's most rapid expansion into empires with their conflicts, intrigues, and physical combat. The story is not complete until you've read EVERY series in the book. I have a

friend who re-reads the entire series once a year. It really is that good.

The Reverse of the Medal has quite a different pace than the previous books in the series. This is not to suggest that it is slow or belabored - far from it - but the rhythm of life at sea, punctuated with foul weather, chase and battle is curiously absent here. One gets the sense that the series is about to take another tack. The primary joy for me (aside from the vivid descriptions of life at sea) is the relationship between Aubrey and Maturin, and the flaws each man possess, making them much more real. Here, Aubrey is framed - a "put-up job" in 19th century parlance, with grave consequences. It is perhaps bewildering that Aubrey, who is such a lion at sea is such a helpless babe ashore. This almost child-like trust (along with the political turmoil created by his father) is the root of the plot. Aubrey's willingness to trust his fellow officers also plays into the turmoil as he reflects, "True, I have spent less time on shore than most men, and few have had such luck; but I was surprised to find how much jealousy it had caused. I had no idea I had so many enemies, or at least ill-wishers in the service." It is painful, therefore to see a character (as flawed as he is) to be so humbled and publically humiliated. O'Brian is never one to close a door without leaving another open, however. While _The Reverse of the Medal_ concludes with a rabbit-punch to the kidney, there is a glimmer of hope that things will be made right, and our hero will once again return to sea. This lifeline (as one would expect) is in the form of Dr. Maturin, whose secret life as an intelligence operative provides some context and (I hope) some opportunity for redemption. Perhaps most frustrating of all, the story concludes as a virtual cliff-hanger. I take comfort in knowing that I don't have to wait years for the next installment to be written. Highly recommended reading.

Every book in the series is a pleasure to read, but this was not the best in the series. I loaned it to a friend many years ago and never got it back, so I bought it again recently to complete the set. I will read it again, as I have with all of the others. People new to the Aubrey/Maturin series should definitely not make this the first book they read. Start at the beginning with Master and Commander, and then enjoy all 20 books in sequence.

This series of novels is about Britain's Royal Navy of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, but it's more about a small group of main characters. Patrick O'Brian is under appreciated. He's the best story teller in my experience and his characters are easy to believe in and even fall in love with. If you haven't read any, I'll make the semi-blasphemous suggestion that you start with the third novel, "HMS Surprise". The characters are fully developed, the plot is exciting and the nautical jargon is

not as imposing as in some of the other books.

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