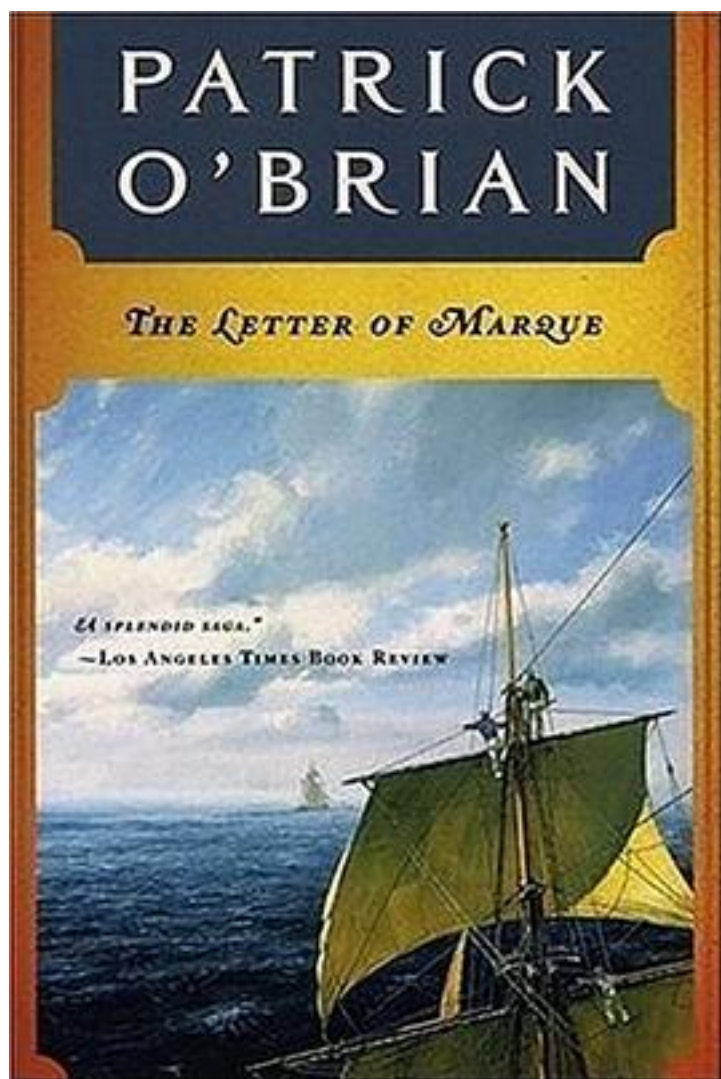


The Letter of Marque



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Patrick O'Brian's Aubrey-Maturin tales are widely acknowledged to be the greatest series of historical novels ever written. All twenty books are being re-issued by Harper Perennial with stunning new jackets. Jack Aubrey is a naval officer, a post-captain of experience and capacity. When 'The Letter of Marque' opens he has been struck off the Navy List for a crime he has not committed. With Aubrey is his friend and ship's surgeon Stephen Maturin, who is also an unofficial British intelligence agent. Maturin has bought for Aubrey his old ship the Surprise, so that the misery of ejection from the service can be palliated by the command of what Aubrey calls a 'private man-of-war' -- a letter of marque, a privateer. Together they sail on a voyage which, if successful, might restore Aubrey to the rank, and the raison d'etre, whose loss he so much regrets. Around these simple, ostensibly familiar elements Patrick O'Brian has written a novel of great narrative power, exploring his extraordinary world once more, in a tale full of human feeling and rarely matched in its drama.

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